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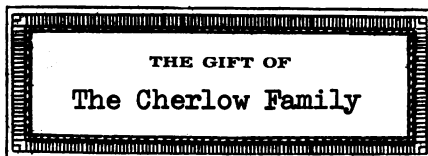
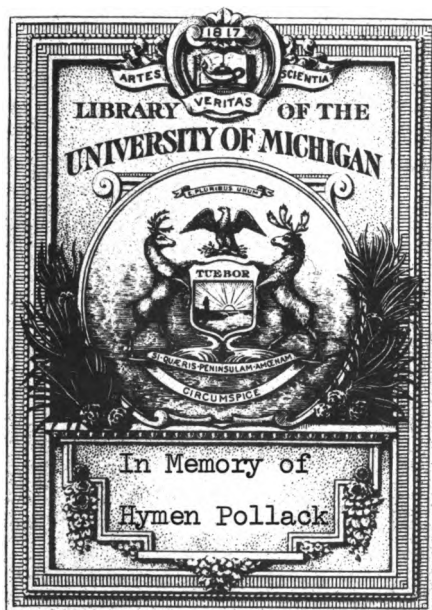
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**SUDDENLY THE DOOR OPENED AND DENIS APPEARED.**

Verdun Edition

THE COMPLETE WORKS  
OF  
**Guy de Maupassant**  
**THE WINDOW**  
AND SHORT STORIES

Translations and Critical and Interpretative Essays by

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## INTRODUCTION

BY F. C. DE SUMICHRIST

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Y common consent Maupassant has been given first rank among the writers of the naturalistic school. More completely than any other he fulfils the conditions laid down by the apostles of that creed: he is as nearly impersonal as it is possible for a man of marked characteristics to be; he is a close and accurate observer of the subjects he selects for study and reproduction; he excludes the play of imagination and the flight of fancy; he avoids the poetic—albeit he trained himself to verse-writing—both because he is essentially far removed from being a poet and because poetry tempts to modification and transformation of the thing seen. He has no ideal, least of all any spiritual ideal; consequently he has

no aspirations; he is frankly and entirely of the earth, earthy; his love of nature is not what is generally understood by that term: it is removed from the love of nature exhibited by Wordsworth and other poets and prose-writers in England, from that which distinguishes Chateaubriand, Lamartine and Victor Hugo in France. Nature, to Maupassant, is primitiveness, in other words unrestricted liberty. The fields and woods, the distant prospects, the vast expanses of the sea, do not speak to him of greater, purer and nobler things, do not suggest to him higher thoughts. They are fair, impressive, strange, physically restful or stimulating, but the contemplation of them never leads him upward. In his novels, in his tales, he very faithfully portrays the external aspects of nature, but there he stops short, inevitably, since he is solely a materialist.

A materialist in the very fullest sense of the word. Every one of his tales, every one of his novels, conclusively proves this. The literary perfection of his work is undeniable, and fortunate is it for his readers that this is the case. It is this perfection which warrants admiration for the man: what he has done he has done thoroughly well. The literary critic derives real satisfaction from the literary, the artistic excellence of the work; he recognizes gladly and proclaims willingly the acuteness of observation and the vigor of reproduction. The ordinary reader is captivated by the dramatic force of many of the incidents, by the startling nature of many of the motives, by the cool directness of expression. But, in the case of those who read superficially, the effect is profoundly depressing, as must invariably be the case with unalloyed materialism.

Even a cursory reading of Maupassant's works

will cause the following points to be noticed, aside from that extraordinary power of style already referred to: Maupassant abhors man individually and yet more collectively; he despises and loathes his fellow-creatures; he is sick unto death of the crushing monotony of life; there is nothing in life, nothing worth having or desiring outside of bodily, material enjoyments; he detests religion and all that pertains to it; the notion of God evokes naught but execration and imprecation from him; his hatred of and contempt for mankind, for society, induces in him a detestation of social relations and inspires an intense desire to be rid of all memories, all remembrances; he is filled by an overmastering dread of death which, he feels, will forever end the one and only thing he clings to: satisfaction of the senses.

These are characteristic traits in Maupassant, and while he shares some of them with other writers of the school, in no one of the more prominent are they so highly developed as in him. His great master, the man who made Maupassant the literary artist he is—Gustave Flaubert—is not invariably depressing; Emile Zola, foul, bestial and materialistic though he customarily is, rises at times to cleaner heights and stirs other than base thoughts; Alphonse Daudet, with his infinite sadness, scarcely ever fails to let a beam of his Provence sunshine break through the shadow; but Maupassant is inflexibly and unchangingly the abhorrer of man.

The reasons for this are not far to seek: his parentage, his early upbringing, his conception and practice of life once he emerged from parental and pedagogical control, the effect of his surroundings and the ideas prevailing in the France of his day throw light upon his character and the nature of his work.

The influences which act upon society and fashion it necessarily make themselves felt on the individuals composing that society. The France into which Henri-René-Albert-Guy de Maupassant was born, on August 5, 1850, was a France that had been convulsed by a succession of revolutions, the first and greatest of which had struck at the very roots of the spiritual life of the people; a France that had been intoxicated for years with military triumphs and that had, by sheer weight of brute force, directed by genius, lorded it over continental Europe; that had, by logical process, been driven into a clerical and monarchical reaction which, in its turn, was replaced by a *bourgeois* rule satisfying no one and incapable of controlling the hostile factions seeking its destruction.

Maupassant's youth and early manhood coincided with the period of the Second Empire, a time when material prosperity blinded men to the corruption and relaxation of morality that followed in its train. Swift enriching of a nation, as of an individual, almost certainly involves moral deterioration. It was the case with France under the third Napoleon: luxury and extravagance completed the work begun by the "philosophers" and skeptics of the eighteenth century. The old traditions were scorned; the new principles had not yet taken firm root or borne, consequently, any good fruit. Personal immorality streamed in the wake of public dishonesty; honor in man and virtue in woman were alike discounted; religion became largely superficial; the family bond was loosened; the marriage tie, never lightly thought of among the upper class, sat more lightly yet.

The parents of Maupassant unhappily exhibited to the boy a painful disunion, due to the father's

moral failings, which speedily ended in a separation. It was by his mother that Guy and his younger brother Hervé were brought up.

Children observe far more keenly than adults are apt to realize, and draw conclusions from their observations. Maupassant, naturally endowed, like Alphonse Daudet, with a remarkable gift of observation, noted, reflected, and early despised. It was an unfortunate introduction to life, destined to tell upon the writer's point of view in after years. Under such conditions and with such a lad, it was not to be expected that either religion or morality would appeal strongly to him; in point of fact they repelled him, and his antagonism grew instead of diminishing as time went on.

His temperament contributed its share to making him a mere materialist. Strongly built, very vigorous, overflowing with life and energy, passionate, sensual, Maupassant quickly entered on the path of sensual gratification, and early went to excess along that road. Time and again Flaubert warned him seriously and plainly but to no purpose. An athlete, Maupassant overtaxed his bodily powers; a materialist and sensualist, he sapped his intellectual faculties, and, after an unsuccessful attempt at suicide, ended his days in a mad-house.

The influences which acted upon him at the outset of his literary career were not such as to form an effective check to his materialistic tendencies. His great teacher was Flaubert, a man whose example, on the whole, might advantageously have been followed by his pupil, and whose maxims, had Maupassant taken them to heart and applied them, would have delayed and perhaps even prevented the lamentable ending of the brilliant young writer's career. Flaubert held very tenaciously to the belief



that the man who desires to observe and know life accurately, in its widest and in its most detailed aspects, and who seeks to reproduce reality in his books, must keep himself apart from the whirl of life and pleasure.

But Flaubert, along with this wholesome view, was also an earnest devotee of the doctrine of the irresponsibility of art, of art for art's sake. It is a doctrine which has much to recommend it—to a certain class of artists—but it is likewise a most dangerous doctrine in that it severs art from life and morality, and grants to its disciples a freedom from responsibility for their actions which is wholly incompatible with the sound principles of society and social intercourse. Such a doctrine would naturally be acceptable to an ardent sensualist and materialist of the stamp of Maupassant, falling in, as it did, with his own tendency to total disregard of the ordinary beliefs of men. So, in his choice of subjects as in his language, he more than once startled and even shocked case-hardened followers of the doctrine.

How difficult it must have been to startle them may be inferred from the composition of the literary circle in which Maupassant gained his first notable success as a tale-writer. It was that familiarly known as "Zola's tail," formed in 1876. Among the members of it were Paul Alexis, who played the part of Boswell to Zola's Johnson, and whose mind, according to the ingenuous confession of Maupassant himself, was especially foul; Ceard, Huysmans, who later "experienced religion," Margueritte, who has since won a high place as a novelist. It was the time when Zola trespassed beyond all bounds in the filthiness and repulsiveness of his novels, then admired and lauded by the "tail,"

which, none the less, revolted and separated from him when he brought out *la Terre*. Such a circle was not, it will readily be seen, of a nature to free Maupassant of his haunting, close-clinging sensuality, or to inspire him with nobler and loftier motives in his literary work.

There is still another point to be considered in this connection: the essential opposition between the Gallic and the Anglo-Saxon mind, the Gallic and the Anglo-Saxon point of view. The Frenchman justifies his license by referring it to the *esprit gaulois*, a convenient cloak for nastiness and filth as well as a sound explanation of true wit; and he absolutely refuses to believe in the Anglo-Saxon preference for cleanliness and morality, proclaiming it to be mere "British cant." Taking this fact in connection with the other forces at work, with the greater looseness of morals—already too loose—due in part to the succession of political and social convulsions which had afflicted and still afflict France, the peculiar tendencies of Maupassant become more intelligible even if no less unpleasant.

By way of compensation, Maupassant has the qualities of his defects, and the amazing force, vividness and truthfulness of his work are largely due to the causes enumerated above. They are not the only causes, but they are important factors.

To begin with, his very materialism, gross as it often is, stood him in good stead when he set about reproducing life as he saw it. The idealist necessarily selects and modifies as well as invents; he has in mind a certain purpose outside of and beyond the reproduction of the scene or character he has chosen. Chateaubriand, in his *Atala*, strove to impress on his readers the power and beauty of the Roman Catholic creed; Victor Hugo in *les Misérables* willed

to flagellate society and to extol the individual. These two great writers, and all those who like them are idealists, consciously or unconsciously bend events to the support of their ideal, modify characters to make them conform to that ideal. Chateaubriand's Chactas is as impossible as Victor Hugo's Jean Valjean; the author knows it, the reader knows it, but the reader also knows that the characters are subordinated to a purpose and accepts the impossibility as tranquilly as a mathematician accepts a postulate.

But Maupassant is entirely free from any such pre-occupation as visibly affects the idealist. He has no object to attain save the accurate reflection, the exact reproduction of life as he sees it. He sees man coarse, foul, sensual; woman unchaste and deceitful, and he simply so paints man and woman. He has no desire to apply any formula, to prove any theory; he merely tells what he beholds, and tells it in direct, incisive language. Maupassant is not and never was a theorist like Emile Zola, who wrote volumes to expound and justify his conception of the novel; consequently Maupassant is truer in his reproduction of life than is Zola. He is called a naturalistic writer and is included among the members of that school, but that is not because he enrolled himself among them or adopted and practised their principles, but because critics and public alike always wish a writer to be labeled and easily recognizable as forming one of a group or a class. Maupassant did not abide by any æsthetic formula; he disliked formulas; he wished to be as free from trammels as a writer as he was free from them as an individual. No imperious necessity, therefore, compelled him to modify his scenes or his characters so that they should fit into a set scheme. He simply

transported them from the reality around him into his books.

The rigid naturalistic rule required that a writer should describe such people only as he had rubbed elbows with, had known personally or studied directly. This Maupassant did without an effort and without a thought of rule; he had no other method of work, nor did it occur to him to seek any other, and herein lies one of the causes of the intense reality in his stories. The share of imagination, of invention in them is exceedingly slight. Every one of his novels is the recapitulation and outcome of a part of his own life and of the lives of the people with whom he came in contact, and the same is true of every one of his tales. He has no need to invent: his observations and his experiences furnish him with ample material. His youth spent in Normandy, among the fishermen, the sailors, the farmers, the peasants, the sportsmen, the shopkeepers, the middle class, upper and lower, proved later a rich treasure house of knowledge from which he draws at will. His experiences during the war, when he served in the ranks, provided him with dramatic incidents utilized later with telling effect, and one of which is the *motif* of the tale that first brought him into notice: *Boule-de-suif*. His life in Paris as an *employé*, first in the Ministry of Marine and later in the Ministry of Public Instruction, his excursions on the Seine, especially between Asnières and Maisons-Laffitte, gave birth to at least one novel and many a harrowing or many an amusing or scandalous tale. He traveled in Brittany, he dwelt for a space in Auvergne, he visited Corsica, rambled through Italy, made a dash into Sicily, wandered in Algeria and Tunisia, and even ran across to England; and everywhere, on the somber shores and the misty *landes* of Brittany, in

the gorges of Auvergne, under the Italian skies or on the torrid sands of Africa, he saw, noted, remembered, and afterward wrote the novels and tales which have made him famous.

*Mouche* is the living reproduction of his weekends on the river, and every one of the personages in the tale are well-known and were recognized at once; *Bel-Ami* is the tale of his journalistic experiences and the picture of the Paris he was then frequenting; *Une Vie* paints the Norman society he knew intimately, as *Un Héritage* depicts the departmental offices in which he spent some years, as *Mont-Oriol* is the story of days in Auvergne. His tales, especially those of which the scene is laid in Normandy, were so startlingly true to life and the actors in them so accurately—and unblushingly—described that more than once indignant protests assailed Maupassant, who, possibly, welcomed them as tributes to his accuracy. The sickening incident in *En mer* is one that he either beheld in person or had related to him as the boat came in; *le Baptême*, *la Roche aux Guillemots*, *Pierrot*, *Un réveillon*, and how many more, are drawn from life; fancy, imagination, invention have no part in them.

But how was it Fortune so favored Maupassant that incidents, at once so numerous, so varied, so startling and yet often so commonplace, thus came in his way, crowded upon him? He has told us the secret himself in the preface to *Pierre et Jean*—in some respects his best novel—in which he describes his training under Bouilhet first and Flaubert next. For Maupassant underwent a long and thorough training in his art, and if he attained perfection as a stylist, it was not without long and hard labor. Louis Bouilhet, the poet, had been, with Flaubert, the childhood's friend of Maupassant's mother and

her brother, himself a gifted man. Bouilhet it was who directed the early literary attempts of the lad. He taught his young follower that quality and not quantity was to be aimed at steadily, and along with quality, originality, and that these results could be attained only by persistent work and a thorough knowledge of the art of writing. Then came Flaubert, and during a period of seven years Maupassant wrote and Flaubert criticized. The value of that training to the young aspirant after success cannot be overestimated, for Flaubert was a consummate artist, painstaking, accurate, and strikingly original. To him life was but to be the handmaid of art, and to art he sacrificed everything. Most conscientious in laying a solid foundation for his scenes and characters, he required the same care on the part of his pupil.

“For seven years,” says Maupassant, “I wrote verse, tales, even a wretched drama. Naught of all this work has survived. The Master read every word, then on the following Sunday, during luncheon, he criticized at length and drove into my mind, little by little, two or three principles which sum up his long and patient teaching. ‘If a man possesses any originality,’ he would say, ‘he must first and foremost bring it out; if he has none, he must acquire it. Talent is sustained patience. One must look at whatever one desires to express long enough and attentively enough to discover some aspect of it which no one has yet seen or described. In everything there is a proportion of unknown, because we are accustomed to use our eyes only with the remembrance of what others before us have thought about what we are looking at. The minutest thing contains something yet unknown. Let us find it. In order to describe a blazing fire or a tree standing in a plain

we must remain in front of that fire and that tree until, so far as we are concerned, they no longer resemble any other tree or any other fire. In that way does a man become an original writer.' "

Thus Maupassant learned first to *see*, actually to see, not merely fancy he saw, but penetrating whatever he studied and drawing from it something not previously indicated. In this way the simplest incidents, suggesting nothing to the average man and making but a fleeting impression upon him, afforded him material for tales of intense dramatic power, and commonplace events subjects of situations startling in their suddenness and their unexpectedness. A good instance of this is the grim *la Ficelle*, simple enough but infinitely vigorous.

Next Flaubert taught Maupassant the importance of searching for the one and only word that accurately expresses the idea sought to be conveyed, and this does not mean the accumulation of so complex and superabundantly rich a vocabulary as that of Victor Hugo or of Théophile Gautier, but the plain word that speaks as no other word can speak. And in Maupassant's work it is noteworthy that the language is invariably direct and unmistakable. He learned his lesson thoroughly; his style is as near perfection, probably, as it is possible for a literary style to be.

Further, Maupassant, although classed among the naturalistic writers, never subscribed to or practiced the doctrine of abundant detail, for to him art was not mechanical photography of a subject, but selection of the telling, vital details and traits that would cause the reader to see as the author saw. No greater difference can exist than the practice in this respect of Balzac, the head of the realists, and Zola, the chief of the naturalists, on the one hand,

and Mérimée and Maupassant on the other. Both the latter are sparing of words, yet they produce their effects as surely and as vigorously as either of the others and with infinitely less fatigue to the reader. Maupassant's object, and this also he learned from Flaubert, was not to reproduce everything he saw, but the essential points, those plainly and everlastingly true. It is the characteristic and the distinctive that he seeks and reproduces, not the insignificant, hence the directness and power of his stories. They go, each and all of them, straight to the point; told in simple, forceful language, they leave us in no doubt as to the character or the occurrence. The people live, the things exist. It is no mere play of fancy, no skill of invention, but fact that stares us in the face when we read Maupassant. He unquestionably imparts the fullest, the most thorough illusion of the truth with its logical sequence of events, and that was what he steadily sought to do.

Maupassant has been termed one of the most impersonal of writers, if not absolutely the most impersonal, Mérimée among tale-writers and Leconte de Lisle among poets being the only others who are placed in that category. He unquestionably is impersonal, so far as it is possible for a man of strong and marked character to be so. Impersonality must necessarily and always be relative. Between men like Rousseau, Chateaubriand and Victor Hugo, who fill their works with their dominating personality, and men like Leconte de Lisle, Mérimée and Maupassant, who seek to eliminate themselves and to let their work speak for itself, there are many and varied grades of subjectivity and impersonality. But it is true of Maupassant that he has been nearly completely successful in most of his tales in



this respect. He does stand aside and lets the story unfold itself, without even desiring to point a moral. That, indeed, is the farthest from his purpose, first because he is no believer in morality, conventional or other, secondly, because it is contrary to his view of reality. If the reader chooses to draw conclusions from what he has been told, that is his affair, but the author will not lift a finger, will not utter a word to direct him. The *fact*, that is all he is concerned with.

Yet, as no man can completely abstract his personality from his work, Maupassant has left an impress of his character and tendencies on his literary productions. The choice of many of his subjects speaks eloquently of his preferences; the reflections he puts in the mouths of some of his characters or in his own, for he addresses his reader directly at times, indicate his prepossessions and reveal his detestations. It has been pointed out that even a cursory perusal of the tales compels the conclusion that Maupassant was a misanthrope of the most rabid type, a hater of society and a reviler of God. Thus does his personality make its mark. As he is no believer in any form or system of morality, he has no hesitation in being what men rightly term immoral; his conception of love between the sexes is immeasurably removed from what it is conventionally supposed and intended to be, what it is actually in so very many cases; to him love is simply sensual satisfaction. As he despises man and society, he makes not the slightest effort to veil the loathsome and repulsive in man.

But again these defects in him produce results which, from the purely literary and artistic point of view, are remarkable and admirable. His vision is lucid and penetrating, consequently his reproduc-

tion is accurate; his indifference makes him impartial, consequently true, and thus comes about that amazing fidelity to reality which is his chief title to the rank he occupies among writers. Fiction ceases to be fiction with him; the reader is unconsciously convinced of the truth of what he is reading; he recognizes in many cases—it may be hoped not in all—how vivid is the reproduction.

Maupassant being untrammelled by any form of doctrine, as by any form of morality, by any æsthetic theory as by any belief in ideals, could and did look at reality with a vision practically undisturbed. As he had no didactic purpose, not even so much as shows in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, he leaves his characters to speak for themselves and does not even take the pains of directing the reader's attention to such and such a trait; he neither condemns nor approves their actions, their words, their motives. What these motives are he does not attempt to analyze; they must be judged by the reader himself who is a witness of the acts they cause. He is utterly indifferent to the opinion the reader may entertain on his subjects, his personages or himself. He has seen an incident, he has studied a circle of society and reproduced it in a tale or a novel: there his connection with it ends. He is not responsible for it: the thing *is*, that suffices for him. As it *is*, he has the right to reproduce it. What its effect for good or evil may be on others is a matter of profound unconcern to him. He is utterly irresponsible to God or man.

But why did Maupassant never depict virtue in his tales? Why has he not given the world of readers a single story of pure love and simple happiness and content? The question is almost an idle one. It is because he understood none of these things and cared

for none of them. He was incapable of comprehending pure love; the thing had no existence for him; any instance of it that might have been brought to his notice he would have soiled with a caustic, cynical, unbelieving remark. Virtue he did not believe in, and assuredly he would not look for it in the class of women he frequented. Apart from this, virtue failed to interest him in not being dramatic, in not presenting literary and artistic possibilities, wherein he was totally in error and short-sighted in the extreme. Simple happiness and content were alien to his nature as he developed it, a nature which ever sought, from the moment he thought for himself, the fulness of excitement and the maddest of satisfactions. In *Sur l'eau*, he has himself described his conception of life: it is purely physical and sensual. He could not understand any other form of life or of happiness.

It is but a partial view of life, therefore, that is met with in his work; so far as he has examined life he has reproduced it with extraordinary felicity and fidelity, but it is very far from being life in its fullness and diversity. Maupassant is entitled to the praise of having done what he has done thoroughly well, but likewise to the blame of having deliberately confined himself to a comparatively small fraction of the world around him, and that fraction usually not the most pure, the most useful, the most ennobling. The ultimate effect of his work is to depress and discourage, not to inspire and strengthen, and why this is so needs no further elucidation. A materialist, he has given a materialistic representation of the people and incidents he has observed. It is perfect of its kind, but the kind itself is far from approaching the best. He remains and will remain a master of style, a master of the art of tale-writing

but never, under any conceivable circumstances, will he attain the highest rank. The value of his work lies in its astonishing faithfulness of reproduction of reality, but more is required to make any work great. And it is precisely that which is wanting in his.





## A CRITICAL AND INTERPRETATIVE ESSAY

BY ADOLPHE COHN

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It is a common failing among critics and literary historians to base their judgments of writers upon the idea that they have said all they had to say, that their writings contain views in themselves complete of society or of the human mind and that they may be justly blamed if some part of the picture has been left incomplete. Such a system, legitimate perhaps to a certain extent when dealing with such writers as Hugo, or Tennyson, Goethe or Voltaire, with whom fate, in the allotment of years for work, has dealt with unwonted generosity, falls very short from ideal justice when the writers studied have not been allowed to run the whole course of their life expectation, when, while in the full exercise of their productive powers they have been struck by the almighty hand of Death, like Molière or, like Maupassant, by a disease to which death itself must

have been preferable. In trying to form an estimate of Maupassant's works, to draw from the mass of his writings his conception of society, or of literary art, this must not be forgotten, that he began to write for the public at the age of thirty and that he was hardly forty-one when the mental illness which was to result in bodily enfeeblement and two years later in death fell upon him with the swiftness of the thunderbolt, leaving only a parched and shrivelled skeleton in the place of the luxuriant and generous foliage of a magnificent offspring of the forest of nature.

Only eleven years! And in that short period one volume of verse, two comedies, six one-volume novels and more than twenty volumes of short stories! And in this whole body of production not one work, nay, not one line that seems to have been hurriedly written or that betrays haste and looseness in composition. This, in short, is Maupassant's record and it would be enough to stamp him as one of the most extraordinary writers of his time or of all times.

It is impossible to speak of Maupassant without mentioning Flaubert's influence over him. It was something more than influence. Maupassant was not simply a disciple, but literally a pupil of Flaubert. For a period of about ten years the younger man kept on writing without publishing, simply because the pages covered by him had not been approved by the illustrious author of *Madame Bovary*, of whom he was at that time a constant companion. Both Flaubert and Maupassant were from Normandy, and when the latter came to Paris, a seeker after literary fame, he quite naturally turned for advice and inspiration to the great man from his province. A more exacting critic it would have been

impossible for him to find. On two literary sins Flaubert was absolutely inexorable; an inharmonious sentence, or the use of a word that might have a meaning slightly different from that which the author intended to convey to the mind of the reader. Only when his young friend's French seemed to him to be flowing harmoniously and unmistakably lucid and descriptive did Flaubert say to him: "Go ahead!" And not until Flaubert uttered the words did Maupassant dare to step out of the small coterie of writers from which he had received friendly applause and to submit his productions to the judgment of the general public.

Another influence, somewhat different in form, though not antagonistic, to that of Flaubert, was at that time working upon Maupassant—the influence of Zola, well known already, but not at the height of his fame. It is in a small volume containing a number of stories, each one by a different author, gathered under general title of *Soirées de Médan* ("Evenings at Médan"), Médan being Zola's country place, that Maupassant made his literary *début*. Zola himself had contributed to the volume a notable story, *l'Attaque du Moulin*, since then dramatized and turned into an opera libretto. But in spite of the success of the Zola contribution, it is not too much to say that the most striking composition in the volume was the story published over the hitherto unknown signature of Guy de Maupassant and under the strange title of *Boule de Suif* ("tallow-ball").

The immediate success of *Boule de Suif*, which instantaneously lifted the formerly unknown author to a position in the front rank of the writers of the time, was not entirely due to the literary merits of the story. It belongs to a class of writings in which France was quite naturally interested at the time of



its publication. Less than ten years had then elapsed since the close of the Franco-German war of 1870-71. This had not been a war waged outside of the frontier, the incidents of which were known only to the military element of the nation, but a war which had brought the victorious invader to the very heart of the country, in which fully one-third of the national territory had been occupied by the enemy, for a shorter or longer time, in some cases for as long as three years, as the last German soldier did not leave the French soil until the last penny of the tremendous war indemnity had been paid into the coffers of the victors. Few were those whose minds did not harbor some vivid recollections of incidents due to the long and enforced contact of the two nations. War is a curse; but it has this advantage that it removes for a while the fetters of that which men call civilization, a freedom that not only allows but even compels the animal man to show himself in his natural garb. Maupassant, on the outbreak of that war, had just reached the adult age. He had done his duty to his country, had seen a good deal of the war, had heard more about it; in short, he had his mind as full of war recollections as any man in his generation, and the French public was ready to listen to any story based upon such recollections, if but told with a moderate degree of cleverness.

*Boule de Suif* was that, and more than that. The subject was not drawn from the writer's imagination, like the subjects of Daudet's charming war stories, *l'Enfant Espion*, *Salvette et Bernandou*, *le Siège de Berlin*. The incident related by Maupassant had really occurred, at least in its main lines. A pupil of Flaubert, the great founder of the realistic school, it was but natural that in his determination to represent nothing but reality Maupassant

should have determined, at least at the start, to deal with nothing but real facts. This admirably fitted in with the temper of the public which he was addressing. France had had a surfeit of works of imagination. Even the novel, Zola exclaimed, must cease to be a work of fiction and must aim simply to become a document for the historian. The story had other elements of success. The part played in it by the conqueror is not exactly in keeping with the high professions of morality, by the help of which he had tried to have the victory of Germany over France accepted as a victory of virtue over lust. The story therefore was almost sure of being well received.

But all this would not have succeeded in giving it a permanent place in literature. Unless uncovering a real fund of human observation presented in terms closely adapted to the things represented, its success, like that of by far the larger part of the war literature of those times, would have been sure to be but ephemeral. Such was not the case. The story is as fresh to-day, nearly thirty years after its publication, as when it first appeared. It appeals to audiences far different from the French public of 1880 just as much as to its first readers. Even the Germans, when interested in the play and counterplay of human motives, cannot fail to realize its power. It has not a trace of chauvinism. It is not an attack against a class, but merely the record of individual doings, and of the amount of unpalatable truth that it contains quite as large a proportion falls upon one side as upon the other.

The fact is that all the qualities which have caused Maupassant to be acknowledged one of the greatest writers of short stories are already there. He had served a hard and long apprenticeship, but

he emerged from it a master. Whether it must be considered disparagement of him to say that he never wrote anything better than his first story, or, upon the reverse high praise to say that with his first step he reached the goal of perfection, we shall not attempt to decide. This, however, must be remembered, that we have of Maupassant practically only what he wrote between the ages of thirty and forty, a period which in the production of many a longer-lived writer presents a character of striking unity; that Maupassant was stricken when he was hardly past forty, that is, at an age when man, in spite of the dictum of some recent theorists, is still full of possibilities of development. If we will compare Maupassant with other writers, then, with the object of judging by his works of the quality of his mind, we must compare his production only with what they wrote between the ages of thirty and forty. To bring forward anything written at a more advanced age would make the comparisons unfair. Take Balzac, for instance, between 1830 and 1840, and you will find that in bulk, as well as in the variety of subjects treated, the thirty volumes of Maupassant not unfavorably compare with the stupendous production of the author of *La Comédie Humaine*. In breadth and strength of composition, to be sure, Balzac is immensely superior to the more recent writer. But is not this advantage at least as much as offset by the mastery of style which was the undisputed possession of Maupassant and to which Balzac cannot lay the slightest claim?

*Boule de Suif*, with its clearness and precision of style, with the admirable delineation of the various characters of the story, all drawn from the common people of the country and therefore easily recognizable by all, and also with the admirable simplicity

of the dialogue, made Maupassant famous in one day. The volume of verse, *Des Vers*, which he published soon after, did not add much to his reputation. It was read with pleasure, it showed skill in verse construction, strong naturalistic tendencies, but no one could shout that a great poet had been born again to France. Clearly prose was the best instrument for the author of *Boule de Suif*.

His first one volume novel, *Une Vie*, was awaited with a good deal of expectation, expectation which was not entirely disappointed. Although *Une Vie* betrays too clearly the great influence then exerted over Maupassant by Emile Zola, especially in the amazing swiftness with which the characters deteriorate, when read as a series of disconnected chapters, taking each incident by itself as a separate story, it is in every way a worthy sequel to *Boule de Suif* and it showed that the author was not hemmed in by any narrowness of observation, but was equally at ease, and equally convincing in the description of attitudes and reproduction of speech of all classes of society.

In this, as a whole, mainly consists the chief interest of the six novels written by Maupassant, although *Pierre et Jean* and *Bel-Ami* show a greater power of extended composition than any of the other ones and allow one to suppose that if the author had lived longer he might have made as great a name for himself as an author of romances as he has as an author of short stories.

As it is, Maupassant stands unrivaled at the head of the French writers who have handled the short story. First of all, leaving out one or two excursions into the domain of mystery, like *Le Horla*, Maupassant's are never impossible stories, and this for a good reason, viz.: that Maupassant made it a

point always to start from some real occurrence which had come to his knowledge; a curious similarity with the practice of another great Norman writer, the greatest writer given by Normandy to France, Pierre Corneille, who, after his *Cid*, never chose the subject of a tragedy anywhere but in history, for fear of presenting to the public impossible actions. Then his field of vision is extraordinarily wide, his observation astonishingly varied. His Parisian *boulevardier*, his provincial nobleman are as true to life as his artisan, his peasant girl, or his fisherman. After all, man is intensely interested in man, and you cannot take ten steps in any of Maupassant's stories without coming across some person whose gait, speech, manners are so natural that you feel like following him or her as long as you are not called away by some other and more important errand. Perhaps you may not learn very much about them, perhaps nothing more than their mood, happy boisterousness or unfathomable disgust at things in general, in an after-dinner walk, but this little something is a bit of human experience; no striking of attitudes about it, or, if there be, some clever warning of the author has put us on our guard and we see the ass or rather the monkey under the lion's skin.

To say that Maupassant has treated all sorts of subjects, has run through the whole gamut of human passions, would be an exaggeration. But here again we say: he might have done it, had he lived longer. As it is, we find that the world of ambition, ambition for power, is not represented in his works; the political comedy, which could have provided him with so many types and subjects, he has left almost untouched; and thus the picture of society which is presented by him is not as complete as that of Balzac, say, or Tolstoy. The passions which seem to

have had most interest for him, as those that stir man most to action, are love and cupidity. Every man, one might almost say, in Maupassant's stories, is after a woman or after money. And, *mutatis mutandis*, the same thing must be said of his women. This evidently is what he had observed in the short years which it was given him to live. A clear proof of the statement that he presented only what had been observed by him will be found in the number of war stories that are dotted here and there over the wide field of his love and money stories. If there had been no war in France during his lifetime there would have been no war stories in his works.

In spite of the frequent recurrence of the same themes, however, no two stories of Maupassant's are alike. His stories do not repeat themselves. Man changes from one moment to another, like the shapes of the clouds over our heads, and to watch these changing shapes was Maupassant's unceasing delight.

How Maupassant can have been called a pessimist passes our understanding. No one ever more fully, more deeply or boisterously according to the occasion, enjoyed the good things of life. Nature intoxicated him, he reveled in it as the beast which delves into a cool stream in the heat of a summer day. To be sure he saw the ugly side of things, and he would have been sorry not to see it, so long as it existed. But that he considered it a necessity in the plan of the universe does not seem an inference legitimately drawn from his work. Nay, did he think that there is any such thing as a plan of the universe? Is it not because he did not see clearly the connections that bind together all the atoms of the Infinite that he preferred to present disconnected bits of observation and to write short stories for the

beguilement of idle hours, rather than ponderous and pretentious long romances filled with characters presenting a unity which he did not discover in life? Who knows? What he says, anyhow, is clear. It is clear because of his admirable style. It is precise, sharply cut because of his astonishing command of easily understood words. Not one among the contemporary writers of France commands such a rich and at the same time such a simple and unpretentious vocabulary.

His fame has gone far beyond the boundaries of his native land. Tolstoy marvels at the depth of human interest he finds in his stories. And but yesterday, in his *Ecce Homo*, the eccentric German, Friedrich Nietzsche, saluted him as "That great Latin."

Such praise is not undeserved. In an age full of make-believe Maupassant strove to be absolutely sincere, and he succeeded.





## THE WINDOW



MET Madame de Jadelles in Paris last winter. She immediately pleased me enormously. But you know her as well as I do . . . no . . . excuse me . . . almost as well as I do. . . . You know how fanciful and poetic she is, with a free and easy manner and an impressionable heart, wilful, emancipated, bold, enterprising, audacious, in short, above all prejudice, and notwithstanding all that, sentimental, delicate, easily offended, tender and modest.

She was a widow, and I adore widows. I therefore thought of getting married and started in to court her. The more I knew her the more she pleased me, and I thought the time right to propose. I was in love with her and was on the way to be too much so. When a man gets married he should not love his wife too much, because then he makes a fool of himself; he becomes at the same time foolish and brutal.

Therefore, one day, putting on my best clothes, I went to her and said: " Madame, I am fortunate enough to love you and I come to ask you if I may



have some hope of pleasing you and of giving you my name."

She answered quietly: "You seem to be in quite a hurry, Monsieur! I haven't the slightest idea how long it will take me to find out whether or not you'll please me, but I am perfectly willing to give you a trial. Physically you seem all right. It remains to be seen whether you are also satisfactory as to heart, character and habits. The majority of the marriages become stormy or criminal because the contracting parties do not know each other well enough.

"Some little habit or some opinion on a question of morals or religion, some disagreeable little fault may make unreconcilable enemies, who will be chained to each other until death, of the tenderest and most passionate lovers. I shall not get married, Monsieur, without knowing fully the character of the man who is to share my life with me. I want to study him from near for months.

"This is what I propose. Come and spend the summer with me at my country house in Lauville and there we will see, quietly, whether we are made for each other.

"I see you smiling! Oh! Monsieur, if I were not sure of myself I would not make such a proposition. But I have such a contempt and disgust for love such as you men understand it that a fall from grace is impossible for me. Do you accept?"

I kissed her hand:

"When do we leave, Madame?"

"Will the tenth of May suit you?"

"Most assuredly."



A month later we were settled. She was really a very peculiar woman. She studied me from morn-

ing until night. As she loved horses, we spent hours each day riding through the woods, talking of everything, for she was trying to penetrate into my inmost thoughts as well as to observe my every action.

As for myself, I was becoming more and more enamored every day and I did not worry in the slightest about any similarity of temperament. I soon noticed that I was under observation even while asleep. Some one was sleeping in a little room beside mine, where they only entered very late and with infinite precautions. This continual spying began to exasperate me. I wished to hasten the event and, one evening, I became a little bolder. She received me in such a manner that I refrained from any new attempts; but a strong desire took possession of me to make her pay, in some manner, for the strict supervision under which she had placed me, and I thought of an excellent plan.

You know Césarine, her maid, a pretty girl from Granville, where all the women are beautiful, and who is as blond as her mistress is dark. Well, one afternoon, I drew the soubrette into my room and slipping a hundred francs into her hand, I said:

“My child, do not be afraid, I only wish to do unto your mistress as she is doing to me.”

The girl smiled slyly. I continued:

“I know that I am being spied upon day and



night. Some one watches me eat, drink, dress, shave and put on my socks, I know it "

The girl stammered: " Well . . . Monsieur . . .," and then was silent. I continued:

" Do not deny that you sleep in the next room in order to observe whether I snore or talk in my sleep . . . ! "

She burst out laughing and said:

" Well, Monsieur . . ." And once more she stopped.

I became excited. " Well, you understand, my child, that it is not fair that everything should be known about me and that I should know nothing about the person who is going to be my wife. I love her with all my heart. She has the face, and the heart, the wit of which I dream, in this respect I am the happiest of mortals; nevertheless, there are a few things which I would like to know."

Césarine stuck the bill in her pocket. I understood that the bargain was struck.

" Listen, my child, we men lay great stress on certain . . . physical details, which do not stop a woman from being charming, but which may detract from her value in our eyes. I am not asking you to tell me anything disagreeable about your mistress, nor even to admit to me her secret faults, if she has any. Only answer frankly to four or five questions which I am going to ask. You know Madame de Jadelle as well as you do yourself, since you dress and undress her daily. Well . . . tell me—is she as plump as she seems? "

The little servant did not answer.

I went on:

" See here, my child, you know that there are women who pad a little here, or there. Tell me, does she pad? "

Césarine had dropped her eyes, she said shyly:

"Keep on asking, Monsieur; I will answer everything at once."

"Well, there are some women who are so knock-kneed that their knees hit at every step they take. There are others who are so bow-legged that their legs resemble the arches of a bridge. It is very pretty either way, but tell me how is your mistress?"

The little servant did not answer.

I continued:

"There are some who have a fat arm and a slim waist. There are some whose neck is all bones. All that is very pretty indeed; but I would like to know how your mistress is built. Tell me frankly and I will give you a lot more money. . . ."

Césarine looked at me and burst out laughing:

"Monsieur, except for the fact that Madame is dark, she is just like me."

Then she ran away.

I had been made ridiculous. I had been laughed at. I decided at least to revenge myself on the impertinent little servant.

An hour later, having unscrewed the lock of the room from which she watched my sleep, I quietly entered.

Toward midnight she arrived at her post of observation. I immediately followed her. When she noticed me she tried to cry out, but I stopped her mouth with my hand; and I soon convinced myself that Madame de Jadelles must be very well built.

Césarine and I became great friends. She was a splendid sample of the lower Normandy race, tall and slender. She lacked, perhaps, certain qualities which might have been overlooked by Henry IV. I

soon showed them to her, and as I adore perfume I gave her a bottle of lavender water.

My friendship with her enabled me to wait more patiently for Madame de Jadelle's decision. I became docile, quiet and obedient.

As for my fiancée, she must have found me charming, and I understood, by certain signs, that I was soon to be accepted. I was undoubtedly the happiest man in the world, waiting quietly, for the chaste kiss of the woman whom I loved, in the arms of a young and beautiful girl who was fond of me.

One evening, as we were coming back from our ride, Madame de Jadelle remarked that her grooms had not taken proper care of the horse which she was riding. She kept repeating: "Let them beware, let them beware, I know a way of catching them at it."

I slept soundly all night and awoke early, full of vim and vigor. I was accustomed, every morning, as soon as I was dressed, to smoke a cigarette in a tower of the castle, which one reached by a staircase which was lighted by a large window on the first floor. I followed my usual custom this morning.

I was advancing noiselessly in my felt slippers, when I noticed Césarine, leaning out of the window. I could not see the whole of her, but only the lower half of her body. I approached so slowly that the young girl did not hear me. Taking every precaution I came up close behind her. Quickly I threw my arms around her and imprinted a lover's greeting on her bare neck.

I was surprised. I smelt verbenas! But I did not have time to think about that. I received a heavy blow or rather a punch in the face which almost broke my nose. I heard a cry which made my

hair stand on end. The person had turned around—it was Madame de Jadelle!

She beat the air with her hands, like a woman about to faint, gasped for a minute, and fled.

Ten minutes later, Césarine, dumfounded, brought a letter; I read: “Madame de Jadelle hopes that M. de Brives will rid her of his presence immediately.”

I left.

Well, I am not yet comforted. I have attempted every means and every explanation to excuse myself for this mistake. All my measures have failed.

Ever since that time I have an inordinate love for verberna.



## THE STRANGER



WE were speaking of adventures, and each one of us was relating his story of delightful experiences, surprising meetings, on the train, in a hotel, at the seashore. According to Roger des Annettes, the seashore was particularly favorable to the little blind god.

Gontran, who was keeping mum, was asked what he thought of it.

"I guess Paris is about the best place for that," he said. "Woman is like a precious trinket, we appreciate her all the more when we meet her in the most unexpected places; but the rarest ones are only to be found in Paris."

He was silent for a moment, and then continued:

"By Jove, it's great! Walk along the streets on some spring morning. The little women, daintily tripping along, seem to blossom out like flowers. What a delightful, charming sight! The dainty perfume of violet is everywhere. The city is gay, and everybody notices the women. By Jove, how tempting they are in their light, thin dresses, which occasionally give one a glimpse of the delicate pink flesh beneath!

"One saunters along, head up, mind alert, and eyes open. I tell you, it's great! Then you see her in the distance; when still a block away, you already know that she is going to please you at closer quarters. You can recognize her by the flower on her hat, the toss of her head, or her gait. She approaches, and you say to yourself: 'Look out, here she is!' You come closer to her and you devour her with your eyes.

"Is it a young girl running errands for some store, a young woman returning from church, or hastening to see her lover? What do you care? Her well-rounded bosom shows through the thin waist. Oh, if you could only take her in your arms and fondle and kiss her! Her glance may be timid or bold, her hair light or dark. What difference does it make? She brushes against you, and a cold shiver runs down your spine. Ah, how you wish for her all day! How many of these dear creatures have I met this way, and how wildly in love I would have been had I known them more intimately!

"Have you ever noticed that the ones we love most hopelessly are those whom we have never met? Curious, isn't it? From time to time we barely catch a glimpse of some woman, the mere sight of whom thrills our senses. Those are the only ones we notice. Personally, when I think of all the adorable creatures that I have elbowed in the streets of Paris, I fairly rave. Who are they? Where are they? Where can I find them again? There is a proverb which says that happiness often passes alongside of us; I am sure that I have often passed alongside of the one who could have given me supreme joy."

Roger des Annettes had listened smilingly. He answered: "I know that as well as you do. This



is what happened to me. About five years ago, for the first time I met, on the Pont de la Concorde, a young woman who made a wonderful impression on me. She was dark, rather stout, with glistening hair, and eyebrows which nearly met over two dark eyes. On her lip was a scarcely perceptible down, which made one dream—dream as one dreams of beloved woods, on seeing a bunch of wild violets. She had a small waist and a well-developed bust, which was presented as a challenge, offered as a temptation. Her eyes were like two black spots on white enamel. Her glance was strange, vacant, unthinking, and yet wonderfully beautiful.

“ I imagined that she might be a Jewess. I followed her, and then turned around to look at her. She walked with a graceful, swinging stride. At the Place de la Concorde she took a carriage, and I stood there like a fool, moved by the strongest desire that had ever assailed me.

“ For about three weeks I thought only of her; and then her memory passed out of my mind.

“ Six months later I descried her in the Rue de la Paix again. On seeing her I felt the same shock that one experiences on seeing a once dearly beloved woman. I stopped that I might better observe her. When she passed close enough to touch me I felt as though I were standing before a red-hot furnace. Then, when she had passed by, I noticed a delicious sensation, as of a cooling breeze blowing over my face. I did not follow her. I was afraid of doing something foolish. I was afraid of myself.

“ She haunted all my dreams.

“ It was a year before I saw her again. But just as the sun was going down on one beautiful evening in May I recognized her walking along the Avenue des Champs-Élysées. The Arc de Triomphe

stood out in bold relief against the fiery glow of the sky. A golden haze filled the air; it was one of those delightful spring evenings which are the glory of Paris.

“I followed her, tormented by a desire to address her, to kneel before her, to pour forth the emotion which was choking me. Twice I passed by her only to fall back, and each time as I passed by I felt this sensation as of scorching heat which I had noticed in the Rue de la Paix.

“She glanced at me, and then I saw her enter a house on the Rue de Presbourg. I waited for her two hours and she did not come out. Then I decided to question the janitor. He seemed not to understand me. ‘She must be visiting some one,’ he said.

“The next time I was eight months without seeing her. But one freezing morning in January, I was following the Boulevard Malesherbes at a dog trot, so as to keep warm, when at the corner I bumped into a woman and knocked a small package out of her hand. I tried to apologize. It was she!

“At first I stood stock still from the shock; then, having returned to her the package which she had dropped, I said suddenly:

“‘I am both grieved and delighted, Madame, to have jostled you. For more than two years I have known you, admired you, and had the most ardent wish to be presented to you; nevertheless I have been unable to find out who you are or where you live. Please excuse these foolish words. Attribute them to a passionate desire to be numbered among your acquaintances. Such sentiments can surely offend you in no way! You do not know me. My name is Baron Roger des Annettes. Make inquiries about me and you will find that I am a gentleman. Now, if you refuse my request, you will throw me into

abject misery. Please be good to me and tell me how I can see more of you.'

"She looked at me with her strange vacant stare, and answered smilingly:

" 'Give me your address. I will come and see you.'

"I was so dumfounded that I must have shown my surprise. But I quickly gathered my wits together and gave her a visiting card, which she slipped into her pocket with a quick, deft movement.

"Becoming bolder I stammered:

" 'When shall I see you again?'

"She hesitated, as though mentally running over her list of engagements, and then murmured:

" 'Will Sunday morning suit you?'

" 'I should say it would!'

"She went on, after having stared at me, judged, weighed and analyzed me with this heavy and vacant look which seemed to leave a quieting and deadening impression on the person towards whom she happened to glance.

"Until Sunday my mind was occupied day and night trying to solve the problem of my future conduct toward her. I finally decided to buy her a jewel, a pretty little jewel, which I placed in its box on the mantelpiece, and left it there awaiting her arrival.

"I spent a restless night waiting for her.

"At ten o'clock she came, calm and quiet, and with her hand outstretched, as though she had known me for years. Drawing up a chair, I took her hat and coat and furs, and laid them aside. And then, timidly, I took her hand in mine; after that all went on without a hitch.

"Ah, my friends! what a bliss it is, to stand at a discreet distance and watch the hidden pink and

blue ribbons partly out of sight, to observe the hazy lines of the beloved one's form, as they become visible through the last of the filmy garments! What a delight it is to watch the timid eagerness of the one whom you so ardently await!

"Her back was turned towards me, and my eyes were irresistibly drawn to a large black spot right between her shoulders. What could it be? Were my eyes deceiving me? But no, there it was, staring me in the face! Then my mind reverted to the faint down on her lip, the heavy eyebrows almost meeting over her coal-black eyes, her glossy black hair—I should have been prepared for some surprise.

"Nevertheless I was dumfounded, and my mind was haunted by dim visions of strange adventures. I seemed to see before me one of the evil genii of the *Thousand and One Nights*, one of these dangerous and crafty creatures whose mission it is to drag men down to unknown depths. I thought of Solomon, who made the Queen of Sheba walk on ice, that he might be sure that her feet were not cloven.

"And when the time came for me to sing of love to her, my voice forsook me. At first she showed surprise, which soon turned to anger; and she said, quickly drawing on her clothes:

"'It was hardly worth while for me to go out of my way to come here.'

"I wanted her to accept the ring which I had bought for her, but she replied haughtily: 'For whom do you take me, sir?' I blushed to the roots of my hair. She left without saying another word.

"There is my whole adventure. But the worst part of it is that I am now madly in love with her. I can't see a woman without thinking of her. All the others disgust me, unless they remind me of *her*. I cannot kiss a woman without seeing *her* face be-

fore me, and without suffering the torture of unsatisfied desire. She is always with me, always there, dressed or nude, my true love. She is there, beside the other one, visible but intangible. I am almost willing to believe that she was bewitched, and carried a talisman between her shoulders.

“ Who is she? I don’t know yet. I have met her once or twice since. I bowed, but she pretended not to recognize me. Who is she? An Oriental? Yes, doubtless an Oriental Jewess! I believe that she must be a Jewess! But why? Why? I don’t know! ”



## THE DOWRY



THE marriage of Maître Simon Lebrument with Mademoiselle Jeanne Cordier was a surprise to no one. Maître Lebrument had bought out the practice of Maître Papillon; naturally, he had to have money to pay for it; and Mademoiselle Jeanne Cordier had three hundred thousand francs clear in currency and in bonds payable to bearer.

Maître Lebrument was a handsome man. He was stylish, although in a provincial way; but, nevertheless, he was stylish—a rare thing at Boutigny-le-Rebours.

Mademoiselle Cordier was graceful and fresh-looking, although a trifle awkward; nevertheless, she was a handsome girl, and one to be desired.

The marriage ceremony turned all Boutigny topsy-turvy. Everybody admired the young couple, who quickly returned home to domestic felicity,

having decided simply to take a short trip to Paris, after a few days of close intimacy.

This *tête-à-tête* was delightful, Maître Lebrument having shown just the proper amount of delicacy. He had taken as his motto: "Everything comes to him who waits." He knew how to be at the same time patient and energetic. His success was rapid and complete.

After four days, Madame Lebrument adored her husband. She could not get along without him, she had to have him near her all the time in order to caress and kiss him, to run her hands through his hair and beard, to play with his hands and nose, etc. She would sit on his knees, and taking him by the ears she would say: "Open your mouth and shut your eyes." He would open his mouth wide and partly close his eyes, and he would try to nip her fingers as she slipped some dainty between his teeth. Then she would give him a kiss, sweet and long, which would make chills run up and down his spine. And then, in his turn, he would not have enough caresses, enough lips, enough hands, enough of himself to please his wife from morning to night and from night to morning.



When the first week was over, he said to his young companion:

"If you wish, we will leave for Paris next Tuesday. We will be like two lovers who are not married; we will go to the restaurants, the theaters, the concert halls, everywhere, everywhere!"

She was ready to dance for joy.

"Oh! yes, yes. Let us go as soon as possible."

He continued:

"And then, as we must forget nothing, ask your

father to hold your dowry in readiness; I shall pay Maître Papillon on this trip."

She answered:

"All right! I will tell him to-morrow morning."

And he took her in his arms once more, to renew those sweet games of love which she had so enjoyed for the past week.

The following Tuesday, father-in-law and mother-in-law went to the station with their daughter and their son-in-law who were leaving for the capital.

The father-in-law said:

"I tell you it is very imprudent to carry so much money around in a pocketbook." And the young lawyer smiled.

"Don't worry; I am accustomed to such things. You understand that, in my profession, I sometimes have as much as a million about me. In this manner, at least, we avoid a great amount of red tape and delays. You needn't worry."

The conductor was crying:

"All aboard for Paris!"

They scrambled into a car where two old ladies were already seated.

Lebrument whispered into his wife's ear:

"What a bother! I won't be able to smoke."

She answered in a low voice:

"It annoys me too, but not on account of your cigar."

The whistle blew and the train started. The trip lasted about an hour, during which time they did not say very much to each other, as the two old ladies did not go to sleep.

As soon as they were in front of the Saint-Lazare Station, Maître Lebrument said to his wife:

"Dearie, let us first go over to the Boulevard



and get something to eat: then we can quietly return and get our trunk and bring it to the hotel."

She immediately assented.

"Oh! yes. Let's eat at the restaurant. Is it far?"

He answered:

"Yes, it's quite a distance, but we will take the omnibus."

She was surprised:

"Why don't we take a cab?"

He began to scold her smilingly:

"Is that the way you save money? A cab for a five minutes' ride at six cents a minute! You would deprive yourself of nothing."

"That's so," she said, a little embarrassed.

A big omnibus was passing by, drawn by three big horses, which were trotting along. Lebrument called out:

"Conductor! Conductor!"

The heavy carriage stopped. And the young lawyer, pushing his wife, said to her quickly:

"Go inside; I'm going up on top, so that I may smoke at least one cigarette before lunch."

She had no time to answer. The conductor, who had seized her by the arm to help her up the step, pushed her inside, and she fell into a seat, bewildered, looking through the back window at the feet of her husband as he climbed up to the top of the vehicle.

And she sat there motionless, between a fat man who smelled of cheap tobacco and an old woman who smelled of garlic.

All the other passengers were lined up in silence—a grocer's boy, a young girl, a soldier, a gentleman with gold-rimmed spectacles and a big silk hat, two ladies with a self-satisfied and crabbed look,

which seemed to say: "We are riding in this thing, but we don't *have* to," two sisters of charity, and an undertaker. They looked like a collection of caricatures.

The jolting of the wagon made them wag their heads and the shaking of the wheels seemed to deaden them—they all looked as though they were asleep.

The young woman remained motionless.

"Why didn't he come inside with me?" she was saying to herself. An unaccountable sadness seemed to be hanging over her. He really need not have acted so.

The sisters motioned to the conductor to stop, and they got off one after the other, leaving in their wake the pungent smell of camphor. The car started up and soon stopped again. And in got a cook, red-faced and out of breath. She sat down and placed her basket of provisions on her knees. A strong odor of dish-water filled the vehicle.

"It's further than I imagined," thought Jeanne.

The undertaker went out, and was replaced by a coachman who seemed to bring the atmosphere of the stable with him. The young girl had as a successor a messenger, whose feet exhaled the odor of his errands.

The lawyer's wife began to feel ill at ease, nauseated, ready to cry without knowing why.

Other persons left and others entered. The stage went on through interminable streets, stopping at stations and starting again.

"How far it is!" thought Jeanne. "I hope he hasn't gone to sleep! He has been so tired the last few days."

Little by little all the passengers left. She was left alone, all alone. The conductor cried:

"Vaugirard!"

Seeing that she did not move, he repeated:

"Vaugirard!"

She looked at him, understanding that he was speaking to her, as there was no one else there. For the third time the man said:

"Vaugirard!"

Then she asked:

"Where are we?"

He answered gruffly:

"We're at Vaugirard, of course! I have been yelling it for the last half-hour!"

"Is it far from the Boulevard?" she said.

"Which boulevard?"

"The Boulevard des Italiens."

"We passed that a long time ago!"

"Would you mind telling my husband?"

"Your husband? Where is he?"

"On the top of the 'bus."

"On the top! There hasn't been anybody there for a long time."

She started, terrified.

"What? That's impossible! He got on with me. Look well! He must be there."

The conductor was becoming uncivil.

"Come on, little one, you've talked enough! You can find ten men for every one that you lose. Now run along. You'll find another one in the street."

Tears were coming to her eyes. She insisted:

"But, Monsieur, you are mistaken; I assure you that you must be mistaken. He had a big portfolio under his arm."

The man began to laugh:

"A big portfolio! Oh! yes! He got off at the Madeleine. He got rid of you, all right! Ha! ha! ha!"

The stage had stopped. She got out and, in spite of herself, she looked up instinctively to the roof of the 'bus. It was absolutely deserted.



Then she began to cry, and, without thinking that anybody was listening or watching her, she said out loud:

"What is going to become of me?"

An inspector approached.

"What's the matter?"

The conductor answered, in a bantering tone of voice:

"It's a lady who got left by her husband during the trip."

The other continued:

"Oh! that's nothing. You go about your business."

Then he turned on his heels and walked away.

She began to walk straight ahead, too bewildered, too crazed even to understand what had happened to her. Where was she to go! What could she do? What could have happened to him? How could he have made such a mistake? How could he have been so forgetful?

She had two francs in her pocket. To whom could she go? Suddenly she remembered her cousin Barral, one of the assistants in the offices of the Ministry of the Navy.

She had just enough to pay for a cab. She drove to his house. He met her just as he was leaving for his office. He was carrying a large portfolio under his arm, just like Lebrument.

She jumped out of the carriage.

"Henry!" she cried.

He stopped, astonished.

"Jeanne! Here—all alone? What are you doing? Where have you come from?"

Her eyes full of tears, she stammered:

"My husband has just got lost!"

"Lost! Where?"

"On an omnibus."

"On an omnibus?"

Weeping, she told him her whole adventure.

He listened, thought, and then asked:

"Was he calm, this morning?"

"Yes."

"Good. Did he have much money with him?"

"Yes, he was carrying my dowry."

"Your dowry! The whole of it?"

"The whole of it—in order to pay for the practice which he bought."

"Well, my dear cousin, by this time your husband must be well on his way to Belgium."

She could not understand. She kept repeating:

"My husband—you say——"

"I say that he has disappeared with your—your capital—that's all!"

She stood there, a prey to conflicting emotions, sobbing.

"Then he is—he is—he is a villain!"

And, faint from excitement, she leaned her head on her cousin's shoulder and wept.

As people were stopping to look at them, he pushed her gently into the vestibule of his house, and, supporting her with his arm around her waist, he led her up the stairs, and as his astonished servant opened the door, he ordered:

"Sophie, run to the restaurant and get a luncheon for two. I am not going to the office to-day."

## THE CHRISTENING



ELL, doctor, a little brandy? ”

“ With pleasure.”

The old ship’s surgeon, holding out his glass, watched it as it was slowly filled by the golden liquid. Then, holding it in front of his eyes, he let the light from the lamp stream through it, smelled it, tasted a few drops and smacked his lips with relish. Then he said:

“ Ah! the charming poison! Or rather the seductive murderer, the delightful destroyer of peoples!

“ You people do not know it the way we do. You may have read that admirable book entitled *L’Assommoir*, but you have not, as I have, seen alcohol exterminate a whole tribe of savages, a little kingdom of negroes—alcohol calmly unloaded by the barrel by red-bearded English seamen.

“ Right near here, in a little village in Brittany near Pont-l’Abbé, I once witnessed a strange and terrible tragedy caused by alcohol. I was spending my vacation in a little country house left me by my father. You know this flat coast where the wind whistles day and night, where one sees, standing or reclining, these giant rocks which in the olden times were regarded as guardians, and which still retain something majestic and imposing about them. I

always expect to see them come to life, and start to walk across the country with the slow and ponderous tread of giants, or to unfold enormous granite wings and fly toward the paradise of the Druids.

"Everywhere is the sea, always ready on the slightest provocation to rise in its anger and shake its foamy mane at those bold enough to brave its wrath.

"And the men who travel on this terrible sea, which with one motion of its green back can overturn and swallow up their frail barks—they go out in the little boats, day and night, hardy, weary and drunk. They are often drunk. They have a saying which says: 'When the bottle is full you see the reef, but when it is empty you see it no more.'

"Go into one of their huts; you will never find the father there. If you ask the woman what has become of her husband, she will stretch her arm out over the dark ocean which rumbles and roars along the coast. He remained there one night, when he had had too much to drink; so did her oldest son. She has four more big, strong, fair-haired boys. Soon it will be their time.

"As I said, I was living in a little house near Pont-l'Abbé. I was there alone with my servant, an old sailor, and with a native family which took care of the grounds in my absence. It consisted of three persons, two sisters and a man who had married one of them, and who attended to the garden.

"A short time before Christmas my gardener's wife presented him with a boy. The husband asked me to stand as godfather. I could hardly deny the request, and so he borrowed ten francs from me for the cost of the christening, as he said.

"The second day of January was chosen as the date for the ceremony. For a week the earth had

been covered by an enormous white carpet of snow, which made this flat, low country seem vast and unlimited. The ocean appeared to be black in contrast with this white plain; one could see it rolling, raging, and tossing its waves as though wishing to annihilate its pale neighbor, which appeared to be dead, it was so calm, quiet and cold.

"At nine o'clock the father, Kerandec, came to my door with his sister-in-law, the big Kermagan, and the nurse, who carried the infant wrapped up in a blanket. We started for the church. The weather was so cold that it seemed to dry up the skin and crack it open. I was thinking of the poor little creature who was being carried on ahead of us, and I said to myself that this Breton race must surely be of iron, if their children were able, as soon as they were born, to stand such an outing.

"We came before the church, but the door was closed, the priest was late.

"Then the nurse sat down on one of the steps and began to undress the child. At first I thought there must have been some slight accident, but I saw that they were leaving the poor little fellow naked, completely naked, in the icy air. Furious at such imprudence, I protested:

"'Why, you are crazy! You will kill the child!'

"The woman answered quietly: 'Oh, no, sir; he must wait naked before the Lord.'

"The father and the aunt looked on undisturbed. It was the custom. If it were not adhered to misfortune was sure to attend the little one.

"I scolded, threatened and pleaded, I used force to try to cover the frail creature. All was in vain. The nurse ran away from me through the snow, and the body of the little one turned purple. I was about to leave these brutes when I saw the



priest coming across the country, followed by the sexton and a young boy. I ran towards him and gave vent to my indignation. He showed no surprise, nor did he quicken his pace in the least. He answered:

“ ‘What can you expect, sir? It’s the custom. They all do it, and it’s of no use trying to stop them.’

“ ‘But at least hurry up!’ I cried.

“ ‘He answered: ‘But I can’t go any faster.’

“ ‘He entered the vestry, while we remained outside on the church steps. I was suffering. But what about the poor little creature who was howling from the effects of the biting cold!

“ ‘At last the door opened. He went into the church. But the poor child had to remain naked throughout the ceremony. It was interminable. The priest stammered over the Latin words and mispronounced them horribly. He walked slowly and with a ponderous tread. His white surplice chilled my heart. It seemed as though, in the name of a pitiless and barbarous god, he had wrapped himself in another kind of snow in order to torture this little piece of humanity that suffered so from the cold.

“ ‘Finally the christening was finished according to the rites, and I saw the nurse once more take the frozen, moaning child and wrap it up in the blanket.

“ ‘The priest said to me: ‘Do you wish to sign the register?’

“ ‘Turning to my gardener, I said: ‘Hurry up and get home quickly so that you can warm that child.’ I gave him some advice so as to ward off, if not too late, a bad attack of pneumonia. He promised to followed my instructions, and left with his sister-in-law and the nurse. I followed the priest into the vestry, and when I had signed he demanded five francs for expenses.

"As I had already given the father ten francs, I refused to pay twice. The priest threatened to destroy the paper and to annul the ceremony. I, in turn, threatened him with the district attorney. The dispute was long, and I finally paid five francs.

"As soon as I reached home I went down to Kerandec's to find out whether everything was all right. Neither father, nor sister-in-law, nor nurse had yet returned. The mother, who had remained alone, was in bed, shivering with cold, and starving, for she had had nothing to eat since the day before.

"Where the deuce can they have gone?' I asked. She answered without surprise or anger: 'They're going to drink something to celebrate.' It was the custom. Then I thought of my ten francs which were to pay the church and would doubtless pay for the alcohol.

"I sent some broth to the mother and ordered a good fire to be built in the room. I was uneasy and furious, and promised myself to drive out these brutes, wondering with terror what was going to happen to the poor kid.

"It was already six, and they had not yet returned. I told my servant to wait for them, and I went to bed. I soon fell asleep, and slept like a top. At daybreak, I was awakened by my servant who was bringing me my hot water.

"As soon as my eyes were open I asked: 'How about Kerandec?'

"The man hesitated and then stammered: 'Oh! he came back, all right, after midnight, and so drunk that he couldn't walk, and so was Kermagan and the nurse. I guess they must have slept in a ditch, for the little one died and they never even noticed it.'

"I jumped up out of bed, crying:

"What! The child is dead?'

“ ‘ Yes, sir. They brought it back to Mother Kerandec. When she saw it she began to cry, and now they are making her drink to console her.’

“ ‘ What’s that? They are making her drink!’

“ ‘ Yes, sir. I only found it out this morning. As Kerandec had no more brandy or money, he took some wood alcohol, which Monsieur gave him for the lamp, and all four of them are now drinking that. The mother is feeling pretty sick now.’

“ I had hastily put on some clothes, and seizing a stick, with the intention of applying it to the backs of these human beasts, I hastened towards the gardener’s house.

“ The mother was raving drunk beside the blue body of her dead baby. Kerandec, the nurse, and the Kermagan woman were snoring on the floor. I had to take care of the mother, who died towards noon.”

The old doctor was silent. He took up the brandy-bottle and poured out another glass. He held it up to the lamp, and the light streaming through it imparted to the liquid the amber color of molten topaz. With one gulp he swallowed the treacherous drink.





## THE HAIR-PIN



SHALL disclose neither the name of the man nor that of the country. It was far, far away from here on a hot, fertile coast. All day long we had been following the shore covered with crops and the blue, blue ocean. Flowers were growing right near the little, lapping waves. It was hot, that moist, perfumed heat of damp, fertile soil.

I had been told that that night I would find shelter in the house of a Frenchman, who lived on a little promontory, in a grove of orange-trees. Who was he? I did not know. He had arrived one morning ten years before; he had bought land, sown and tilled it; he had worked with a perfect fury. Then from month to month, from year to year, he increased his property; and through tireless work, cent by cent, he had amassed a small fortune.

Nevertheless, he kept on working. Rising with the sun, his whole day was spent superintending the work which was bringing him in the money which he seemed so ardently to desire. Now he appeared to be quite rich.

The sun was setting as I reached his house, which was large, surrounded by orange-trees and overlooking the sea.

As I drew near, a heavily bearded man appeared on the threshold. I bowed and asked him if he could put me up for the night. He held out his hand smiling:

"Enter, my dear sir, and make yourself at home."

He took me to a room, and put a servant at my disposal with the familiar ease of the man of the world; then he left me, saying:

"We will dine when you are ready to come down."

We dined *tête-à-tête* on a terrace facing the sea. At first I spoke to him of this rich, distant, unknown land. He smiled and answered:

"Yes, this land is beautiful. But no country pleases you far from the land you love."

"Do you miss France?"

"I miss Paris."

"Why don't you go back there?"

"I expect to."

And then we began to talk of France, of the boulevards, and of the things of Paris. His questions showed me that he had moved in good society, and many of the names he mentioned were known to me.

"Who is to be seen at Tortoni's nowadays?"

"The same old ones, except for those who have died."

I watched him attentively, pursued by a vague memory. I surely had seen that face somewhere. But where? When? He seemed tired but robust, sad but firm. His long blond beard fell down over his chest, and he had a habit of grasping it in his

hand and then running his fingers through it. He was slightly bald, with heavy eyebrows and a long mustache.

Behind us, the sun, like a ball of fire, was softly dipping into the placid ocean. The sweet, heavy aroma of orange-blossoms was everywhere. His eyes were fastened on mine, and he seemed to see reflected in them the distant image of his beloved Paris.

"Do you know Boutelle?"

"Certainly."

"Has he changed?"

"He is snowy white now."

"And La Ridamie?"

"He is still the same."

"And the women? Tell me about the women.

Let me see—do you know Suzanne Verner?"

"Yes. She is fat and forgotten."

"Ah! and Sophie Astier?"

"Dead."

"Poor child! Did you—do you know——"

He suddenly stopped talking and grew pale. Then in an altered voice he continued:

"No. I had better not talk of that. It upsets me too much."

Then, as though to change the topic, he arose.

"Do you wish to go inside?"

"All right."

And he persuaded me to enter the house.

The lower rooms were enormous, bare, sad, and seemed deserted. The dark-skinned servants had left plates and glasses scattered about everywhere.

My host smiled.

"This is the home, or rather the hut of an exile," he said. "But my room is a little neater. Let us go there."

When I first entered, I thought that I must be in some curiosity shop. The room was full of incongruous objects, queer and varied things which one understood immediately to be souvenirs. On the walls were two pretty copies of well-known paintings, tapestries, weapons both ancient and modern. Right in the middle of the most prominent panel was a square piece of white satin, enclosed in a heavy gilt frame. Surprised, I approached it in order better to observe it, and noticed a hair-pin fastened in the center of the rich material.

My host placed his hand on my shoulder.

"There," he said smiling, "is the only thing that I look at and the only thing that I have seen for ten years. Monsieur Prudhomme once exclaimed: 'This sword is the most beautiful day of my life.' I can say: 'This pin is all my life.'"

I hunted for some commonplace remark, and finally said:

"You have suffered through a woman?"

He answered gruffly:

"It would be truer if you were to say that I am suffering the tortures of the damned. But come out on the balcony. A name was on my lips a minute ago which I did not dare utter, for if you had answered 'dead,' as you did for Sophie Astier, I would have blown my brains out on the spot."

We were out on the balcony, from which we could see two bays, one to the right and one to the left, enclosed by great, gray mountains. It was the hour of twilight, when the earth receives its light from the reflected rays of the sun.

He continued:

"Is Jeanne de Limours still alive?"

He was staring at me with an expression of pitiful suffering.

I smiled.

"I should say so, and more beautiful than ever."

"Do you know her?"

"Yes."

He hesitated: "In full intimacy?"

"No."

He took my hand in his.

"Talk to me about her."

"But I have nothing to say. She is one of the most charming and courted women, or rather girls, in all Paris. She lives an easy and princely life. That's all."

He murmured: "I love her," just as he would have said: "I am going to die." Then, quickly: "Ah! for three years, ours was an entrancing yet terrible life. I all but killed her five or six times; she tried to put my eyes out with that hair-pin which you have just seen. Here, look at that little white spot under the pupil of my left eye. How we loved each other! I can't explain such a passion—you would not understand it.

"A simple love probably exists, one caused by the yearning of two hearts, of two souls; but there is also another kind of love, cruel and hard love, caused by the unconquerable attraction of two opposite natures which hate and adore each other.

"That girl ruined me in three years. I was worth four millions; she squandered them serenely, with that placid smile which seemed to drop from her eyes to her lips.

"Do you know her? There is something irresistible about her! What it is I don't know. Is it the piercing glance of her gray eyes, which pierces you like cold steel, and sticks like a barbed arrowhead? I think it is rather a sweet, indifferent, seductive smile which stays on her face like a mask. Her lan-



guorous gracefulness slowly wraps itself around your heart and holds it captive. Her easy motions and soft musical voice, her graceful gestures and winning smile are the very essence of poetry. For three years *she* was the only person I saw on the earth. How I suffered! She was unfaithful to me. With whom? With anybody! Why? Just in order to deceive me. When I found it out and accused her and upbraided her for it she calmly admitted it. 'Are we married?' she asked.

"Since coming here, I have thought about her so much that I have finally come to understand her: that girl is Manon Lescaut returned to earth. She is Manon, who could not love without deceiving; Manon, for whom love and money were one."

He was silent. Then after a few minutes:

"When I had spent my last cent on her, she calmly said to me: 'You understand, my dear, that I can't live on fresh air and good weather. I love you dearly, better than anyone; but I must live. Poverty and I could never get along together.'

"If I were to tell you what a dreadful life I led with her! When I looked at her, I felt as much like killing her as I did like kissing her! When I glanced her way, I felt an overpowering desire to take her in my arms and hug her to death. There was something in her eyes, something treacherous and intangible which made me despise her; that is perhaps why I loved her so much. Woman, the cruel yet maddening Feminine, was stronger in her than in anybody I had ever known. She was more feminine than any other woman ever was.

"For instance, when I went out with her she would look at all the men, and would seem to offer herself to them through that one glance. That exasperated me, and yet attached me to her all the

more. Notwithstanding her modest and quiet manner, she seemed to belong to everybody who passed her in the street, in spite of myself, in spite of her, just by her nature. Do you understand what I mean?

"What torture! At the theater. in the restaurant, people seemed to snatch her from under my very eyes. And in truth, as soon as I left her alone she did belong to others.

"I have not seen her for ten years, and I love her more passionately than ever before."

Darkness had spread its somber cloak over the earth. The penetrating odor of orange-blossoms was floating through the air.

I said to him:

"Will you see her again?"

He answered:

"Of course! I am worth now, in land and money, about seven or eight hundred thousand francs. When the million is complete, I will sell all I own and leave. I will have enough to spend a year with her—one good year. And then farewell—my life will be over!"

I asked: "And then?"

"Then! I know not. All will be over! I may ask her to engage me as her servant."



## THE MORIBUND



HE warm autumn sun was beating down on the farmyard. Under the grass, which had been cropped off close by the cows, the earth, soaked by recent rains, was soft, and sank in under the feet with a soggy noise, and the apple trees, loaded with apples, were dropping their pale green fruit in the dark green grass.

Four young heifers, tied in a line, were grazing, and at times looking toward the house and lowing. The fowls made a colored spot on the dung-heap before the stable, scratching, moving around, and cackling, while two roosters crowed continually, digging worms for their hens, which they would call by a loud clucking.

The wooden gate opened and a man entered. He might have been forty years old, but he looked at least sixty, wrinkled, bent, walking slowly, impeded

by the weight of heavy wooden shoes, full of straw. His long arms hung down from both sides of his body. When he got near the farm, a little yellow pug-dog, tied to the foot of an enormous pear tree, beside a barrel which served as his kennel, began at first to wag his tail and then to bark for joy. The man cried:

“Down, Finot!”

The dog was quiet.

A peasant woman came out of the house. Her large, flat, bony body was outlined under a long jacket which was caught at the waist. A gray skirt, too short, fell to the middle of her legs, which were hidden in blue stockings. She, too, wore wooden shoes, full of straw. The white cap, turned yellow, covered a few hairs which were plastered to the scalp, and her brown, thin, ugly, toothless face had that brutal and savage expression which is often to be found on the faces of the peasants.

The man asked:

“How is he getting along?”

The woman answered:

“The priest said it’s the end—that he will never live through the night.”

Both of them went into the house.

After passing through the kitchen, they entered a low, dark room, barely lighted by one window, in front of which a rag was hanging. The big beams, turned brown with time and smoke, crossed the room from one side to the other, supporting the thin floor of the garret, where an army of rats ran around day and night.

The moist, lumpy dirt floor looked greasy, and, at the back of the room, the bed made an indistinct white spot. A harsh, regular noise, a difficult, hoarse, wheezing breathing, like the gurgling of

water from a broken pump, came from the darkened couch where an old man, the father of the peasant woman, was dying.

The man and the woman approached the dying man and looked at him with calm, resigned eyes.

The son-in-law said:

"I guess it's all up with him this time; he will not last the night."

The woman answered:

"He's been gargling like that ever since mid-day."

They kept silent. The father's eyes were closed, his face was the color of the earth, and so dry that it looked like wood. Through his open mouth came his harsh, rattling breath; and the gray canvas sheet rose and fell with each respiration.

The son-in-law, after a long silence, said:

"There's nothing more to do; I can't help him. It's a nuisance, just the same, because the weather is good and we've got a lot of work to do."

His wife seemed annoyed at this idea. She thought for a short time, and then declared:

"He won't be buried till Saturday, and that will give you all day to-morrow."

The peasant thought the matter over and answered:

"Yes, but to-morrow I'll have to invite the people to the funeral. That means five or six hours to go around to Tourville and Manetot, and to see everybody."

The woman, after meditating two or three minutes, declared:

"It isn't three o'clock yet; you could go out toward Tourville and begin. You can just as well say that he's dead, seeing as he's as good as that now."

The man stood perplexed for a while, weighing

the pros and cons of the idea. At last he declared:  
"Guess I will!"

He started out, but came back after a minute's hesitation:

"As you haven't got anything to do, you might cut up some apples, and make four dozen dumplings to entertain those who come to the funeral. You can light the fire with the wood that's under the shed. It's dry."

He left the room, went back into the kitchen, opened the cupboard, took out a six-pound loaf of bread, cut off a slice, and carefully gathered the crumbs in the palm of his hand and threw them into his mouth, so as not to lose anything. Then, with the end of his knife, he scraped out a little salt butter from the bottom of an earthen jar, spread it on his bread and began to eat slowly, as he did everything.

He recrossed the farmyard, quieted the dog, which had started barking again, went out on the road bordered by his ditch, and disappeared in the direction of Tourville.

As soon as she was alone, the woman began to work. She got the meal-trough, and prepared the dough for the dumplings. She kneaded it for a long time, turning it over and over again, punching, pressing, crushing it. Finally she made a big, round, yellow-white ball, which she placed on the corner of the table.

Then she went to get her apples, and, in order not to injure the tree with a pole, she climbed up by means of a ladder. She chose the fruit with care, only taking the ripe ones, and gathering them in her apron.

A voice called from the road:

"Hey! Madame Chicot!"

She turned around. It was a neighbor, Osime Favet, the mayor, who was on his way to fertilize his fields, seated on the dung-wagon, with his feet hanging over the side. She turned around and answered:

“What can I do for you, Maître Osime?”

“And how is the father?”

She cried:

“He is as good as dead. The funeral is Saturday at seven, because there’s lots of work to be done.”

The neighbor answered:

“So! Good luck to you! Take care of yourself.”

To his kind remarks she answered:

“Thanks; the same to you.”

And she continued picking apples.

When she went back to the house, she went over to look at her father, expecting to find him dead. But as soon as she reached the door she heard his monotonous, noisy rattle, and, thinking it needless to go to him, not to lose any time she began to prepare her dumplings. She wrapped up the fruits, one by one, in a thin layer of paste, then she lined them up on the edge of the table. When she had made forty-eight balls, arranged by dozens, one in front of the other, she began to think of preparing supper, and she hung her kettle over the fire to cook potatoes; for she judged it useless to heat the oven that day, as she had all the next day in which to finish the preparations.

Her husband returned at about five. As soon as he had crossed the threshold, he asked:

“Is it over?”

She answered:

“Not yet; he’s still gargling.”

They went to look at him. The old man was in exactly the same condition. His harsh breathing, as regular as the ticking of the clock, was neither quicker nor slower. It returned every second, the key varying a little, according as the air entered or left his chest.

His son-in-law looked at him and then said:

"He'll pass away without our noticing it, just like a candle."

They returned to the kitchen and started to eat, without saying a word. When they had swallowed their soup, they ate another piece of bread and butter; then, as soon as the dishes were washed, they returned to the dying man.

The woman, carrying a little lamp with a smoky wick, held it in front of her father's face. If he had not been breathing, one would certainly have thought him dead.

The couple's bed was hidden in a little recess at the other end of the room. Silent they went to bed, put out the light, closed their eyes; and soon two unequal snores, one deep and the other shriller, accompanied the uninterrupted rattle of the dying man.

The rats ran around in the garret.



The husband awoke at the first streaks of dawn. His father-in-law was still alive. He shook his wife, worried by the tenacity of the old man.

"Say, Phémie, he don't want to quit. What would you do?"

He knew that she gave good advice.

She answered:

"You needn't be afraid; he can't live through the day. And the mayor won't stop our burying him



to-morrow, because he allowed it for Maître Remard's father, who died just during the plowing season."

He was convinced by this argument, and left for the fields.

His wife baked the dumplings, and then attended to her housework.

At noon the old man was not yet dead. The people hired for the day's work came by groups to look at him. Each one had his say, then they left again for the fields.

At six o'clock, when work was over, the father was still breathing. At last his son-in-law was frightened.

"What would you do now, Phémie?"

She no longer knew how to solve the problem. They went to the mayor. He promised that he would close his eyes, and authorize the funeral for the following day. They also went to the health officer, who likewise promised, in order to oblige Maître Chicot, to antedate the death certificate. The man and the woman returned, feeling more at ease.

They went to bed and to sleep, just as they did the preceding day, their healthy breathing mingling with the more feeble breath of the old man.

When they awoke, he was not yet dead.

Then they began to be frightened. They stood by their father, watching him with distrust, as though he had wished to play them a mean trick, to deceive them, to annoy them on purpose, and they were vexed at him for the time which he was making them lose.

The son-in-law asked:

"What am I going to do?"

She did not know, she answered:

"It certainly is vexing!"

The guests who were expected could not be warned away. They decided to wait, and explain the case to them.

Toward a quarter to seven, the first ones arrived. The women in black, their heads covered with large veils, looking very sad. The men, ill at ease in their homespun coats, were coming forward more slowly, in couples, talking business.

Maître Chicot and his wife, bewildered, received them in despair; and suddenly, both of them together, began to cry as they approached the first group. They explained the matter, related their difficulty, offered chairs, bustled around, tried to make excuses, attempting to prove that everybody would have done as they did, talking continually and giving nobody a chance to answer.

They were going from one person to another:

"I never would have thought it; it's incredible how he can last this long!"

The guests, taken aback, a little disappointed, as though they had missed an expected entertainment, did not know what to do, some remaining seated, others standing. Several wished to leave. Maître Chicot held them back:

"You must take something, anyhow! We made some dumplings; might as well make use of 'em."

The faces brightened at this idea. The yard was filling little by little; the early arrivals were telling the news to those who had arrived later. Everybody was whispering. The idea of the dumplings seemed to cheer everyone up.

The women went in to take a look at the dying man. They would cross themselves near the bed, mutter a prayer and go out again. The men, less anxious for this spectacle, would cast a look through the window, which had been open.

Madame Chicot explained her distress:

“That’s how he’s been for two days, neither better nor worse. Doesn’t he sound like a pump without any water?”



When everybody had had a look at the dying man, they thought of the refreshments; but as there were too many people for the kitchen to hold, the table was moved out in front of the door. The four dozen golden dumplings, tempting and appetizing, arranged in two big dishes, drew to them the eyes of all. Each one reached out to take his, fearing that there would not be enough. But four remained over.

Maitre Chicot, his mouth full, said:

“Father would feel sad if he were to see this. He loved them so much when he was alive.”

A big, jovial peasant declared:

“He won’t eat any more now. Each one in his turn.”

This remark, instead of making the guests sad, seemed to cheer them up. It was their turn, now, to eat dumplings.

Madame Chicot, distressed at the expense, kept running down to the cellar, all the time, after cider. The pitchers were following one another in quick succession. The company was laughing and talking loud now, they were beginning to shout as they do during meals.

Suddenly an old peasant woman who had stayed near the dying man, held there by a morbid fear of the things which would soon happen to her, appeared at the window and cried in a shrill voice:

“He’s dead! he’s dead!”

Everybody was silent. The women arose quickly to go and see.

He was indeed dead. The rattle had ceased. The men looked at each other, looking down, ill at ease. They hadn't finished eating the dumplings. Certainly the rascal had not chosen a propitious moment.

The Chicots were no longer weeping. It was over; they were relieved. They kept repeating:

"I knew it couldn't last. If he could only have done it last night, it would have saved us all this trouble."

Well, anyhow, it was over. They would bury him on Monday, that was all, and they would eat some more dumplings for the occasion.

The guests went away, talking the matter over, pleased at having had the chance to see it and getting something to eat.

And when the man and the woman were alone, face to face, she said, her face contracted with anguish:

"We'll have to bake four dozen more dumplings! Why couldn't he have made up his mind last night?"

The husband, more resigned, answered:

"Well, we'll not have to do this every day."



## TWO LITTLE SOLDIERS



VERY Sunday, as soon as they were free, the little soldiers would go for a walk. They turned to the right on leaving the barracks, crossed Courbevoie with rapid strides, as though on a forced march; then, as the houses grew scarcer, they slowed down and followed the dusty road which leads to Bezons.

They were small and thin, lost in their ill-fitting capes, too large and too long, whose sleeves covered their hands; their ample red trousers fell in folds around their ankles. Under the high, stiff shako one could just barely perceive two thin, hollow-cheeked Breton faces, with their calm, naïve blue eyes. They never spoke during their journey, going straight before them, the same idea in each one's mind taking the place of conversation. For at the entrance of the little forest of Champioux they had found a spot which reminded them of home, and they did not feel happy anywhere else.

At the crossing of the Colombes and Chatou roads, when they arrived under the trees, they would take off their heavy, oppressive headgear and wipe their foreheads.

They always stopped for a while on the bridge at Bezons, and looked at the Seine. They stood there

several minutes, bending over the railing, watching the white sails, which perhaps reminded them of their home, and of the fishing smacks leaving for the open.

As soon as they had crossed the Seine, they would purchase provisions at the delicatessen, the baker's, and the wine merchant's. A piece of bologna, four cents' worth of bread, and a quart of wine, made up the luncheon which they carried away, wrapped up in their handkerchiefs. But as soon as they were out of the village their gait would slacken and they would begin to talk.

Before them was a plain with a few clumps of trees, which led to the woods, a little forest which seemed to remind them of that other forest at Ker-marivan. The wheat and oat fields bordered on the narrow path, and Jean Kerderen said each time to Luc Le Ganidec:

"It's just like home, just like Plounivon."

"Yes, it's just like home."

And they went on, side by side, their minds full of dim memories of home. They saw the fields, the hedges, the forests, and beaches.

Each time they stopped near a large stone on the edge of the private estate, because it reminded them of the dolmen of Locneuvén.

As soon as they would get to the first clump of trees, Luc Le Ganidec would cut off a small stick, and whittling it slowly, he would walk on, thinking of the folks at home.

Jean Kerderen carried the provisions.

From time to time Luc would mention a name, or allude to some boyish prank which would give them food for plenty of thought. And the home country, so dear and so distant, would little by little gain possession of their minds, sending them back

through space, to the well-known forms and noises, to the familiar scenery, with the fragrance of its green fields and sea air. They no longer noticed the smells of the city. And in their dreams they saw their friends leaving, perhaps forever, for the dangerous fishing grounds.

They were walking slowly, Luc Le Ganidec and Jean Kerderen, contented and sad, haunted by a sweet sorrow, the slow and penetrating sorrow of a captive beast which remembers the days of its freedom.

And when Luc had finished whittling his stick, they came to the little nook, where every Sunday they took their meal. They found the two bricks, which they had hidden in a hedge, and they made a little fire of dry branches and roasted their sausages on the ends of their knives.

When their last crumb of bread had been eaten and the last drop of wine had been drunk, they stretched themselves out on the grass side by side, speechless, their half-closed eyes looking away in the distance, their hands clasped as in prayer, their red-trousered legs mingling with the bright colors of the wild flowers.

Toward noon they glanced, from time to time, towards the village of Bezons, for the dairy maid would soon be coming. Every Sunday she would pass in front of them on the way to milk her cow, the only cow in the neighborhood which was sent out to pasture.

Soon they would see the girl, coming through the fields, and it pleased them to watch the sparkling sunbeams reflected from her shining pail. They never spoke of her. They were only glad to see her, without understanding why.

She was a tall, strapping girl, freckled and tanned by the open air—a girl typical of the Parisian suburbs.

Once, on noticing that they were always sitting in the same place, she said to them:

“Do you always come here?”

Luc Le Ganidec, more daring than his friend, stammered:

“Yes, we come here for our rest.”

That was all. But the following Sunday, on seeing them, she smiled with the kindly smile of a woman who understood their shyness, and she asked:

“What are you doing there? Are you watching the grass grow?”

Luc, cheered up, smiled: “P’raps.”

She continued: “It’s not growing fast, is it?”

He answered, still laughing: “Not exactly.”

She went on. But when she came back with her pail full of milk, she stopped before them and said:

“Want some? It will remind you of home.”

She had perhaps instinctively guessed and touched the right spot.

Both were moved. Then, not without difficulty, she poured some milk into the bottle in which they had brought their wine. Luc started to drink, carefully watching lest he should take more than his share. Then he passed the bottle to Jean. She stood before them, her hands on her hips, her pail at her feet, enjoying the pleasure that she was giving them. Then she went on, saying: “Well, bye-bye until next Sunday!”

For a long time they watched her tall form as it receded in the distance, blending with the background, and finally disappeared.



The following week as they left the barracks, Jean said to Luc:

“Don’t you think we ought to buy her something good?”

They were sorely perplexed by the problem of choosing something to bring to the dairy maid. Luc was in favor of bringing her some rolls; but Jean, who had a sweet tooth, thought that candy would be the best thing. He won, and so they went to a grocery to buy two sous’ worth of red and white candies.

This time they ate more quickly than usual, moved by anticipation.

Jean was the first one to notice her. “There she is,” he said; and Luc answered: “Yes, there she is.”

She smiled when she saw them, and cried:

“Well, how are you to-day?”

They both answered together:

“All right! How’s everything with you?”

Then she started to talk of simple things which might interest them: of the weather, of the crops, of her masters.

They didn’t dare to offer their candies, which were slowly melting in Jean’s pocket. Finally Luc, growing bolder, murmured:

“We have brought you something.”

She asked: “Let’s see it.”

Then Jean, blushing to the tips of his ears, reached in his pocket, and drawing out the little paper bag, handed it to her.

She began to eat the little round dainties. The two soldiers sat in front of her, moved and delighted.

At last she went to do her milking, and when she came back she again gave them some milk.

They thought of her all through the week and

often spoke of her. The following Sunday she sat beside them for a longer time.

The three of them sat there, side by side, their eyes looking far away in the distance, their hands clasped over their knees, and they told each other little odds and ends about the villages where they were born, while the cow, waiting to be milked, stretched her heavy head toward the girl and moored.

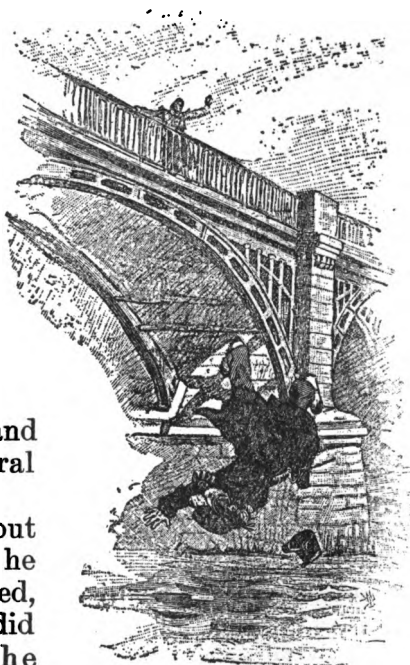
Soon the girl consented to eat with them, and to take a sip of wine. Often she brought them plums in her pocket, for plums were now ripe. Her presence limbered up the little Breton soldiers, who chattered away like two birds.

One Tuesday something unusual happened to Luc Le Ganidec; he asked for leave and did not return until ten o'clock at night.

Jean, worried, racked his brain to find some reason to account for his friend's action.

The following Friday, Luc borrowed ten sous from one of his friends, and once more asked and obtained leave for several hours.

When he started out with Jean on Sunday he seemed queer, moved, changed. Kerderen did not understand; he



vaguely suspect something, but he could not guess what it might be.

They went straight to the usual place, and lunched slowly. Neither was hungry.

Soon the girl appeared. They watched her approach as they always did. When she was near, Luc arose and went towards her. She placed her pail on the ground and kissed him. She kissed him passionately, throwing her arms around his neck, without paying attention to Jean, without even noticing that he was there.

Poor Jean was dazed, so dazed that he could not understand. His mind was upset and his heart broken, without his even realizing why.

Then the girl sat down beside Luc, and they started to chat.

Jean was not looking at them. He understood now why his friend had gone out twice during the week. He felt the pain and the sting which treachery and deceit leave in their wake.

Luc and the girl went together to attend to the cow.

Jean followed them with his eyes. He saw them disappear side by side, the red trousers of his friend making a scarlet spot against the white road. It was Luc who sank the stake to which the cow was tethered. The girl stooped down to milk the cow, while he absent-mindedly stroked the animal's glossy neck. Then they left the pail in the grass and disappeared in the woods.

Jean could no longer see anything but the wall of leaves through which they had passed. He was unmanned so that he did not have strength to stand. He stayed there, motionless, bewildered and grieving—simple, passionate grief. He wanted to weep, to run away, to hide somewhere, never to see anyone again.

Then he saw them coming back again. They were walking slowly, hand in hand, as do the village lovers. Luc was carrying the pail.

After kissing him again, the girl went on, nodding carelessly to Jean. She did not offer him any milk that day.

The two little soldiers sat side by side, motionless as always, silent and quiet, their calm faces in no way betraying the trouble in their hearts. The sun set. From time to time they could hear the plaintive moaning of the cow. At the usual time they arose to return.

Luc was whittling a stick. Jean was carrying the empty bottle. He left it at the wine merchant's in Bezons. Then they stopped on the bridge, as they did every Sunday, and watched the water flowing by.

Jean leaned over the railing, farther and farther, as though he had seen something in the stream which hypnotized him. Luc said to him:

"What's the matter? Do you want a free drink?"

He had hardly said the last word when Jean's head carried away the rest of his body, and the little blue and red soldier fell like a shot and disappeared in the water.

Luc, paralyzed with horror, tried vainly to shout for help. In the distance he saw something move; then his friend's head bobbed up out of the water only to disappear again.

Farther down he again noticed a hand, just one hand, which appeared and again went out of sight. That was all.

The boatmen who had rushed to the scene found no body that day.

Luc ran back to the barracks, crazed, and with

eyes and voice full of tears he related the accident:  
“ He leaned—he—he was leaning—so far over—  
that his head carried him away—and—he fell—he  
fell——”

Emotion choked him so that he could say no  
more. If he had only known!





## MAÎTRE BELHOMME'S BEAST



HE coach for Havre was ready to leave Criquetot, and all the passengers were waiting for their names to be called out, in the courtyard of the Commercial Hotel kept by Monsieur Malandain, Jr.

It was a yellow wagon, mounted on wheels which had once been yellow, but were now almost gray through the accumulation of mud. The front wheels were very small, the back ones, high and fragile, carried the large body of the vehicle, which was swollen like the belly of a beast. Three white horses, with enormous heads and great round knees, were the first things one noticed. They were harnessed ready to draw this coach, which had something of the appearance of a monster in its massive structure. The horses seemed already asleep before the strange vehicle.

The driver, Césaire Horlaville, a little man with a big stomach, supple nevertheless, through his constant habit of climbing over the wheels to the top of the wagon, his face all aglow from exposure to the brisk air of the plains, to rain and storms, and also from the use of brandy, his eyes twitching from the effect of constant contact with wind and hail, appeared in the doorway of the hotel, wiping his mouth

on the back of his hand. Large round baskets, full of frightened poultry, were standing in front of the peasant women. Césaire Horlaville took them one after the other and packed them on the top of his coach; then, more gently, he loaded on those containing eggs; finally he tossed up from down below several little bags of grain, small packages wrapped in handkerchiefs, pieces of cloth or paper. Then he opened the door, and drawing a list from his pocket he called:

“Monsieur le curé de Gorgeville.”

The priest advanced. He was a large, powerful, robust man with a wrinkled and genial expression. He hitched up his cassock to lift his foot, just as the women hold up their skirts, and climbed into the coach.

“The schoolmaster of Rollebosc-les-Grinets.”

The man hastened forward, tall, timid, wrapped in a long frock coat which fell to his knees, and he in turn disappeared through the open door.

“Maître Poiret, two seats.”

Poiret approached, a tall, round-shouldered man, bent by the plow, emaciated through abstinence, bony, with a skin dried by a sparing use of water. His wife followed him, small and thin, like a tired animal, carrying a large green umbrella in her hands.

“Maître Rabot, two seats.”

Rabot hesitated, being of an undecided nature. He asked:

“You mean me?”

The driver was going to answer with a jest, when Rabot dived head first towards the door, pushed forward by a vigorous shove from his wife, a tall, square woman with a stomach vast and round like a keg, and hands as large as hams.

Rabot slipped into the wagon like a rat entering a hole.

“Maître Caniveau.”

A large peasant, heavier than an ox, bent the springs and was in turn engulfed in the interior of the yellow coffer.

“Maître Belhomme.”

Belhomme, tall and thin, came forward, his neck bent, his head hanging, a handkerchief held to his ear as if he were suffering from a terrible toothache.

All these people wore the blue blouse over quaint and antique coats of a black or greenish cloth, Sunday clothes which they would only uncover in the streets of Havre. Their heads were covered by silk caps as high as towers, the emblem of supreme elegance in the small villages of Normandy.

Césaire Horlville closed the door, climbed up on his box and snapped his whip.

The three horses awoke and, tossing their heads, shook their bells.

The driver then yelling “Get up!” as loudly as he could, whipped up his horses. They shook themselves, tugged at their traces, and started with a slow limping trot. And behind them came the coach, rattling its shaky windows and iron springs, making a terrible clatter of hardware and glass, while the passengers were tossed hither and thither like so many rubber balls.

At first all kept silent out of respect for the priest, that they might not shock him. Being of a loquacious and genial disposition, he started the conversation.

“Well, Maître Caniveau,” said he, “how are you getting along?”

The enormous farmer who, on account of his size, waist-line and stomach, felt a bond of sympathy for



the representative of the Church, answered with a smile:

"Pretty well, Monsieur le curé, pretty well. And how are you?"

"Oh! I'm always well and healthy."

"And you, Maître Poirer?" asked the abbé.

"Oh! I'd be all right only the colzas aren't going to give much this year, and times are so hard that they are the only things worth while raising."

"Well, what can you expect? Times are hard."

"Huh! I should say they were hard," sounded the rather virile voice of Rabot's big consort.

As she was from a neighboring village, the priest only knew her by name.

"Is that you, Blondel?" he said.

"Yes, I'm the one that married Rabot."

Rabot, slender, timid, and self-satisfied, bowed smilingly, bending his head forward as though to say: "Yes, I'm the Rabot whom Blondel married."

Suddenly Maître Belhomme, still holding his handkerchief to his ear, began groaning in a pitiful fashion. He was crying "Oh—oh—oh!" and stamping his foot in order to show his terrible suffering.

"You must have an awful toothache," said the priest.

The peasant stopped moaning for a minute and answered:

"No, Monsieur le curé, it is not the teeth. It's my ear—way at the bottom of my ear."

"Well, what have you got in your ear? A lump of wax?"

"I don't know whether it's wax; but I know that it is a bug, a big bug, that crawled in while I was asleep in the haystack."

"A bug! Are you sure?"

“Am I sure? As sure as I am of heaven, Monsieur le curé! I can feel it gnawing at the bottom of my ear! It’s eating my head for sure! It’s eating my head! Oh—oh—oh!” And he resumed stamping.

Great interest had been aroused among the spectators. Each one gave his bit of advice. Poirer claimed that it was a spider, the teacher thought it might be a caterpillar. He had already seen that once, at Campemuret, in Orne, where he had been for six years. In this case the caterpillar had gone through the head and out of the nose. But the man remained deaf in that ear ever after, the drum having been pierced.

“It’s more likely to be a worm,” claimed the priest.

Maître Belhomme, his head resting against the door, for he had been the last one to enter, was still moaning.

“Oh—oh—oh! I think it must be an ant, a big ant—there it is biting again. Oh, Monsieur le curé, how it hurts! how it hurts!”

“Have you seen the doctor?” asked Caniveau.

“I should say not!”

“Why?”

The fear of the doctor seemed to cure Belhomme. He straightened up without, however, dropping his handkerchief.

“What! You have money for them, for those loafers? He would have come once, twice, three times, four times, five times! That means two five-franc pieces, two five-franc pieces for sure. And what would he have done, the loafer, tell me, what would he have done? Can you tell me?”

Caniveau was laughing.

“No, I don’t know. Where are you going?”

" I am going to Havre, to see Chambrelan."

" Who is Chambrelan? "

" The healer, of course."

" What healer? "

" The healer who cured my father."

" Your father? "

" Yes, the healer who cured my father years ago."

" What was the matter with your father? "

" A draught caught him in the back, so that he couldn't move hand or foot."

" Well, what did your friend Chambrelan do to him? "

" He kneaded his back with both hands as though he were making bread! And he was all right in a couple of hours! "

Belhomme thought that Chambrelan must also have used some charm, but he did not dare say so before the priest. Caniveau replied laughing:

" Are you sure it isn't a rabbit that you have in your ear? He might have taken that hole for his home. Wait, I'll make him run away."

Whereupon Caniveau, making a megaphone of his hands, began to mimic the barking of hounds. He snapped, howled, growled, barked. And everybody in the carriage began to roar, even the school-master, who, as a rule, never even smiled.

However, as Belhomme seemed angry at their making fun of him, the priest changed the conversation, and turning to Rabot's big wife, said:

" You have a large family, haven't you? "

" Oh, yes, Monsieur le curé—and it's a pretty hard matter to bring it up! "

Rabot agreed, nodding his head as though to say: " Oh, yes, it's a hard thing to bring up! "

" How many children? "

Her strong and clear voice answered with a tone of authority:

"Sixteen children, Monsieur le curé, fifteen of them from my husband!"

And Rabot smiled broadly, nodding his head. He was responsible for fifteen, he alone, Rabot! His wife said so! Therefore there could be no doubt about it. And he was proud!

And whose was the sixteenth? She didn't tell. It was doubtless the first. Perhaps everybody knew, for no one was surprised. Even Caniveau kept mum.

But Belhomme began to moan again:

"Oh—oh—oh! It's scratching around in the bottom of my ear! Oh, dear, oh, dear!"

The carriage was just stopping before the Café Polyte. The priest said:

"If someone were to pour a little water in your ear, you might perhaps be able to drive it out. Do you want to try?"

"Yes! I am willing."

And everybody got out in order to witness the operation. The priest asked for a bowl, a napkin and a glass of water: then he told the teacher to bend the patient's head and hold it there, and, as soon as the liquid should have entered the canal, to turn his head back again quickly.

But Caniveau, who was already peering into Belhomme's ear to see if he couldn't discover the beast, shouted:

"What a mess! You'll have to clear that out, old man. Your rabbit could never get through that; his feet would stick."

The priest in turn examined the passage and saw that it was too narrow and too congested for him to attempt to expel the animal. It was the teacher who cleared out this passage by means of a match

and a bit of cloth. Then, in the midst of the general excitement, the priest poured into the passage half a glass of water, which trickled over the face through the hair and down the neck of the patient. Then the schoolmaster quickly twisted the head around over the bowl, as though he were trying to unscrew it. A couple of drops dripped into the white receptacle. All the passengers rushed forward. No insect had come out.

However, Belhomme exclaimed: "I don't feel anything any more." The priest triumphantly exclaimed: "Certainly it has been drowned." Everybody was happy and got back into the coach.

But hardly had they started when Belhomme began to cry out again. The bug had aroused itself and had become furious. He even claimed that it had now entered his head and was eating out his brain. He was howling with such contortions that Poirer's wife, thinking him possessed by the devil, began to cry and to cross herself. Then the pain abating a little the sick man began to tell how it was running around in his ear. With his finger he imitated the movements of the body, seeming to see it, to follow it with his eyes: "There it goes up again! Oh—oh—oh—such misery!"

Caniveau was getting impatient. "It's the water that is making the bug angry. It is much more accustomed to wine."

Everybody laughed, and he continued: "When we get to the Café Bourbeux, give it some brandy, and it won't bother you any more, I wager."

But Belhomme could contain himself no longer; he began howling as though his soul were being torn from his body. The priest was obliged to hold his head for him. They asked Césaire Horlaville to stop at the nearest house. It was a farmhouse on the

edge of the road. Belhomme was carried into it and laid on the kitchen table in order to repeat the operation. Caniveau advised mixing brandy and water in order to benumb and perhaps kill the insect. But the priest preferred vinegar.

They poured the liquid in drop by drop this time, that it might penetrate down to the bottom, and they left it several minutes in the organ that the beast had chosen for its home.

A bowl had once more been brought; Belhomme was turned over bodily by the priest and Caniveau, while the schoolmaster was tapping on the healthy ear in order to empty the other.

Césaire Horlaville himself, whip in hand, had come in to observe the proceedings.

Suddenly, at the bottom of the bowl appeared a little brown spot, no bigger than a tiny seed. However, it was moving. It was a flea! First there were cries of astonishment and then shouts of laughter. A flea! Well, that was a good joke, a mighty good one! Caniveau was slapping his thigh, Césaire Horlaville snapped his whip, the priest laughed like a braying donkey, the teacher cackled as though he were sneezing, and the two women were giving little cries of joy, like the clucking of hens.

Belhomme was seated on the table and had taken the bowl between his knees; he was observing, with serious attention and a vengeful anger in his eye, the conquered insect which was twisting around in the water. He grunted, "You wicked little beast!" and he spat on it.

The driver, wild with joy, kept repeating: "A flea, a flea, ah! there you are, damned little flea, damned little flea, damned little flea!" Then having calmed down a little, he cried: "Well, back to the coach! We've lost enough time."

And the passengers, still laughing, went toward the carriage. However, Belhomme, who was the last, declared:

"I am going back to Criquetot. I have nothing more to do in Havre now."

The driver answered: "I don't care, provided you pay for your seat!"

"I only owe you half, since I have been only half way."

"You owe for the whole trip, since you reserved your seat to the end."

And a dispute arose which soon became a furious quarrel. Belhomme swore that he would only give twenty cents, Césaire Horlaville maintained that he must receive forty cents. Their faces close together, they were yelling at each other.

Caniveau got down from the coach:

"First, you owe forty cents to the curé, and then you have to treat everybody, that makes fifty-five, and then you give twenty to Césaire. How's that?"

The driver, greatly pleased at the thought of seeing Belhomme pay out three francs seventy-five, answered: "That suits me!"

"Pay up."

"I won't! First of all, the priest is not a doctor."

"If you don't pay, I will put you back in Césaire's wagon and take you to Havre."

And the giant, seizing Belhomme by the shoulders, lifted him like a child. The latter saw that he would have to give in. He drew out his purse and paid.

Then the coach went once more on its way to Havre, while Belhomme returned to Criquetot, and all the passengers, now quiet, were watching the blue blouse of the peasant as he disappeared down the white road.



## FRIEND JOSEPH



THEY had seen much of each other during the winter in Paris. As is always the case, they had lost sight of each other after leaving school, and had met again when they were old and gray-haired. One of them had married, but the other had remained in single blessedness.

M. de Méroul lived six months in Paris and six months in his little château at Tourbeville. Having married the daughter of a neighboring squire, he had lived a good and peaceful life in the indolence of the man who has nothing to do. Of a calm and quiet disposition, and not over-intelligent, he used to spend his time quietly regretting the past, grieving over the customs and institutions of the day and continually repeating to his wife, who would lift her eyes and sometimes her hands to heaven, as a sign of energetic assent: "Good gracious! What a government!"



Madame de Mérout intellectually resembled her husband as though she had been his sister. She knew, by tradition, that one should above all respect the Pope and the King!

And she loved and respected them from the bottom of her heart, without knowing them, with a poetic fervor, with an hereditary devotion, with the tenderness of a well-born woman. She was good to the marrow of her bones. She had had no children and never ceased mourning the fact.

On seeing, at a dancing party, his old friend, Joseph Mouradour, M. de Mérout felt a deep and simple joy, for in their youth they had been the most intimate of friends.

After the first shouts of surprise caused by the changes which time had wrought in their bodies and countenances, they told each other about their lives since the time they had last met.

Joseph Mouradour, who was from the Midi, had become a government official. His expression was clear and frank; he spoke rapidly, telling his whole mind without discretion. He was a Republican, one of those Republicans who make a free and easy law unto themselves and who claim a freedom of speech which goes as far as brutality.

He came to his friend's house and was immediately loved for his easy cordiality, in spite of his radical ideas. Madame de Mérout would exclaim: "What a shame! Such a charming man!"

Monsieur de Mérout would say to his friend, in a serious and confidential tone of voice: "You have no idea of the harm that you are doing your country." He loved him all the same, for nothing is stronger than the ties of childhood taken up again at a riper age. Joseph Mouradour bantered the wife and the husband, calling them "my amiable snails," and

sometimes he would solemnly declaim against backward people, old prejudices and traditions.

When he was once started on his democratic eloquence, the couple, somewhat ill at ease, would keep silent from politeness and good-breeding; then the husband would try to turn the conversation into some other channel in order to avoid a clash. Joseph Mouradour was only seen in the intimacy of the family.

Summer came. The Mérouls had no greater joy than to receive their friends at their country home at Tourbeville. It was a good, healthy joy, the pleasure of honest people and of country landlords. They would meet their friends at the neighboring railroad station and would bring them back in their carriage, always on the lookout for compliments on the country, on its natural features, on the condition of the roads, on the cleanliness of the farm-houses, on the size of the cattle grazing in the fields, on everything within sight.

They would call attention to the remarkable speed with which their horse trotted, surprising for an animal that did heavy work part of the year before a plow; and they would anxiously await the opinion of the new-comer on their family domain, sensitive to the least word and thankful for the slightest good intention.

Joseph Mouradour was invited, and he announced his arrival.

Husband and wife had come to the train, delighted to welcome him to their home. As soon as he saw them, Joseph Mouradour jumped from the train with a briskness which increased their satisfaction. He shook their hands, congratulated them, overwhelmed them with compliments.

All the way home he was charming, remarking

on the height of the trees, the goodness of the crops and the speed of the horse.

When he stepped on the porch of the house, Monsieur de Méroul said, with a certain friendly solemnity:

"You are as in your own home now."

Joseph Mouradour answered:

"Thanks, my friend; I was hoping so. Anyhow, I never stand on ceremony with my friends. That's how I understand hospitality."

Then he went upstairs, as he said, to dress as a farmer, and he came back all toggled out in blue, with a little straw hat and yellow shoes, a regular Parisian dressed for an outing. He also seemed to become more vulgar, more jovial, more familiar, having put on with his country clothes a free and easy manner which he judged suitable for the occasion. His new manners shocked Monsieur and Madame de Méroul a little, for they always remained serious and dignified, even in the country, as though compelled by the two letters preceding their name to keep up a certain formality even in the closest intimacy.

After luncheon they all went out to visit the farms, and the Parisian astounded the respectful peasants by his tone of comradeship.

In the evening the priest came for dinner, an old, fat priest, accustomed to dining there on Sundays, but who had been especially invited this day in honor of the new guest.

Joseph, on seeing him, made a wry face. Then he observed him with surprise, as though he were a creature of some peculiar race, which he had never been able to observe at close quarters. During the meal he told some rather free stories, allowable in the intimacy of the family, but which seemed to the

Mérrouls a little out of place in the presence of a minister of the Church. He did not say, "Monsieur l'abbé," but simply, "Monsieur." He embarrassed the priest greatly by philosophical discussions about diverse superstitions established over the world. He said: "Your God, Monsieur, is of those who should be respected, but also one of those who should be discussed. Mine is called Reason; he has always been the enemy of yours."

The Mérrouls, distressed, tried to turn the trend of the conversation. The priest left very early.

Then the husband said, very quietly:

"Perhaps you went a little bit too far with the priest."

But Joseph immediately exclaimed:

"Well, that's pretty good! I should put myself out for a shaveling! And say, you will do me the pleasure of not imposing him on me during any more meals. You can both make use of him as much as you wish, but don't serve him up to your friends, hang it!"

"But, my friend, think of his holy——"

Joseph Mouradour interrupted him:

"Yes, I know; they have to be treated like delicate roses! But let them respect my convictions and I will respect theirs!"

That was all for that day.

As soon as Madame de Mérroul entered the parlor, the next morning, she noticed in the middle of the table three newspapers which made her start: the *Voltaire*, the *République-Française* and the *Justice*. Immediately Joseph Mouradour, still in blue, appeared on the threshold, attentively reading the *Intransigeant*. He cried:

"There's a great article by Rochefort. That fellow is a wonder!"

He read it out loud to himself, emphasizing the parts which especially pleased him, so carried away by enthusiasm that he did not notice his friend's entrance. Monsieur de Méroul was holding in his hand the *Gaulois* for himself, the *Clairon* for his wife.

The fiery prose of the master writer who overthrew the empire, spouted with violence, sung in the southern accent, rang throughout the peaceful parlors and seemed to spatter the walls and century-old furniture with a hail of bold, ironical and war-like words.

The man and the woman, one standing, the other sitting, were listening with astonishment, so shocked that they could not move.

In a burst of eloquence Mouradour finished the last paragraph, then exclaimed triumphantly:

"I guess that's pretty good!"

Then suddenly he noticed the two sheets which his friend was carrying, and he in turn stood speechless from surprise. Then quickly walking toward him he demanded angrily:

"What are you doing with those papers?"

Monsieur de Méroul answered hesitatingly:

"But—those—those are my papers!"

"Your papers! What are you doing—making fun of me? You will do me the pleasure of reading mine; they will limber up your ideas, and as for yours—there! that's what I do with them."

And before his astonished host could stop him, he had seized the two newspapers and thrown them out of the window. Then he solemnly handed the *Justice* to Madame de Méroul, the *Voltaire* to her husband, while he sank down into an arm-chair to finish reading the *Intransigeant*.

The couple, through delicacy, made a pretense

of reading a little, then they returned the Republican sheets, which they handled gingerly, as though they might be poisoned.

Then he laughed and declared:

“One week of this régime and I will have you converted to my ideas.”

In truth, at the end of a week he governed the house. He had closed the door against the priest, whom Madame de Méroul had to visit secretly; he had ruled against the admission of the *Gaulois* and of the *Clairon* into the house, so that a servant used to go mysteriously to the post-office to get them, and as soon as he entered they would be hidden under the cushions of the sofa; he arranged everything to suit himself—always charming, always good-natured, a jovial and all-powerful tyrant.

Other friends were expected, pious and conservative friends. The unhappy couple saw the impossibility of having them there then, and, not knowing what to do, one evening they announced to Joseph Mouradour that they would be obliged to absent themselves for a few days, on business, and they begged him to stay on alone. He did not get excited, and answered:

“Very well, I don’t mind! I will wait here as long as you wish. I have already said that there should be no formality between friends. You are perfectly right—go ahead and attend to your business. It will not offend me in the least; quite the contrary, it will make me feel much more completely one of the family. Go ahead, my friends, I will wait for you!”

Monsieur and Madame de Méroul left the following day.

He is still waiting for them.



## THE ASSASSIN.



HE prisoner was being defended by a very young lawyer, a beginner, who spoke as follows:

“ Gentlemen of the jury, the facts are undeniable. My client, an honest man, a model employée, mild and timid, murdered his employer in a fit of anger which seems to me incomprehensible. May I be permitted to give the psychology of this crime, if I may so speak, without changing anything, without excusing anything? You may give your judgment afterward.

“ Jean Nicolas Lougère is the son of very honorable parents, who have made of him a simple and respectful man.

“ Yes, that is his crime—respect! It is a sentiment, gentlemen, which we no longer know nowadays; the name only lives, and seems to have lost all signification. One must go into certain old-fashioned families in order to find this severe tradition, this religion of things or of man, of sentiment or of faith, clad in sacred garments, this faith which will stand neither doubt nor smiles, nor the faintest kind of a suspicion.

“ A man cannot be honest, in the full force of the

word, unless he is respectful. The man who respects has his eyes closed. He believes. We, whose eyes are wide open upon the world, who live here in this court-house, which is the sewer of society, we, who are the confidants of shame, the devoted defenders of all the rascality of humanity, we, who receive with indulgence, with smiling good-will all the guilty ones in order to defend them before you, we, who really love our profession, we measure our sympathy by the size of the fee, we cannot have a respectful soul. We see too often this stream of corruption which extends from the heads of the government down to the last of the knaves, we know too well how everything happens, how everything is given, how everything is sold. Positions, functions, honors, brutally exchanged for a little gold, cleverly manipulated in exchange for titles, or bartered for a woman's kiss. Our duty and our profession compel us to ignore nothing, to suspect everybody, for everyone is suspicious; and, when we find ourselves face to face with a man, such as the murderer seated before you, who has the religion of respect firmly enough instilled in him to become a martyr to it, we are dumfounded.

“ People of our class, gentlemen, are honorable just as we are cleanly, through a disgust for baseness and through a sentiment of personal dignity and pride; but we do not carry in the bottom of our hearts the blind, innate, brutal faith as does this man.

“ Let me tell you the history of his life.

“ He was brought up as children were formerly, dividing the actions of men into two parts: the good and the bad. The good was shown him with an irresistible authority, which made him distinguish it from evil as one distinguishes day from night. His



father did not belong to the race of superior minds which, looking down from above, see the sources of faith and recognize the social necessities from which these distinctions arose.

“ He grew up, therefore, religious and confident, enthusiastic but narrow-minded.

“ When he was twenty-two years old he married a cousin of his, brought up as he had been, simple and pure as he was. He had the inestimable good-fortune to have as life partner an honest woman with a good heart, that is to say, the thing which is rarest and most worthy in the whole world. He had for his mother the veneration which surrounds the mothers of patriarchal families, this profound belief which is reserved for divinities. He transferred to his wife a little of this religion, hardly modified at all by marital familiarity. He lived in absolute ignorance of duplicity, in a state of obstinate rectitude and of quiet bliss which made him a being by himself. Deceiving no one, he could imagine no one's deceiving him.

“ Shortly before his marriage he entered the employ of Monsieur Langlais, recently murdered by him, as cashier.

“ Gentlemen of the jury, we know by the testimony of Madame Langlais and her brother, Monsieur Perthuis, her husband's partner, of all the family and of all the higher employees of this bank that Lougère was a model of honesty, submission, mildness, promptness and of deference to his superiors.

“ He was, therefore, treated with the consideration due to his exemplary conduct. He was accustomed to this homage and to a kind of veneration shown to Madame Lougère, whose praise was on everybody's lips.

“ She died in a few days of typhoid fever.

“ He certainly felt deep sorrow, but it was the cold and calm sorrow of a methodical heart. One could only notice by his pallor and by his changed appearance to what extent he had been wounded.

“ Then, gentlemen, a very natural thing happened.

“ This man had been married for ten years. For ten years he had been accustomed to having a woman near him all the time. He was used to her caress, to her familiar voice when he returned home, to her greetings morning and night; in short, to all the little things which make woman so dear, so indispensable to man. He was perhaps also accustomed to the little material delicacies of the table and to all the attentions which we do not feel, but which, little by little, become necessary to our comfort. He could no longer live alone. Then, in order to while away his interminable evenings, he took the habit of sittings for an hour or so, in a neighboring café. He would drink a bock and sit there motionless, absent-mindedly watching the billiard-balls chasing each other over the green table, listening to the disputes of the players, the discussions of his neighbors on political questions and the bursts of laughter which often followed a rough joke from the other end of the room. He often ended by falling asleep from fatigue and weariness. But at the bottom of his heart he felt the irresistible need for a woman; and every evening, without noticing it, he came a little nearer to the desk where the cashier reigned, a little blonde, unconsciously drawn to her because she was a woman.

“ Soon they began to talk, and he got into the habit of spending all his evenings beside her. She was gracious and thoughtful, as becomes one in business, and she amused herself by keeping his glass

well filled, which was very good for the business. But every day Lougère became more and more attached to this woman whom he did not know, whose whole history he ignored, and whom he loved solely because he saw no other.

“The woman, who was very sly, soon noticed that this man could be very useful to her. Assuredly, the cleverest plan would be to get him to marry her.

“She succeeded without the least difficulty.

“Need I add, gentlemen of the jury, that the conduct of this woman was most shameless, and that marriage, far from putting a stop to it, only made her the more brazen? She seemed to take a special pleasure in deceiving this honest man with all the employés of his office. I say, with all. We have the letters, gentlemen. It was soon a public scandal, and the husband alone, as is always the case, was the only one in ignorance.

“Finally this wretch, with a purpose which is easy to conceive, even led astray the young nineteen-year-old son of her husband’s employer, on whose mind and senses she soon had a nefarious influence. Monsieur Langlais, who until then had shut his eyes through kindness and friendship for his subaltern, on seeing his son in the hands, I should say in the arms, of this dangerous creature, felt a very legitimate anger.

“He made a mistake, immediately calling Lougère and speaking to him, on the spot, of his paternal indignation.

“Nothing remains for me now, gentlemen, but to read you the story of the crime, gathered as evidence from the lips of the dying man himself:

“‘I had just learned that my son had given ten thousand francs to this woman, and my anger was

stronger than my reason. I certainly never doubted the honesty of Lougère, but a certain blindness is more dangerous than a vice.

“ ‘ I therefore had him called up to me, and told him that I found myself obliged to deprive myself of his services.

“ ‘ He stood before me dazed, not understanding. He finished by asking for an explanation with a certain show of anger.

“ ‘ I refused to give him any, claiming that my reasons were too personal. He then thought that I suspected him of embezzlement, and, very pale, he told me to explain myself. Started on this idea, he was very strong, and assumed the right to talk very loud.

“ ‘ Then, as I still kept quiet, he began to insult me, and he soon reached such a point that I was afraid of violence.

“ ‘ Suddenly, one stinging word caught me, and I threw the truth in his teeth.

“ ‘ He remained standing for several seconds, looking at me with a haggard expression; then I saw him snatch from my desk the long scissors which I used for cutting out the pages of certain ledgers, and I saw him fall upon me with uplifted arm, then I felt something under my throat, right above my chest, without feeling the slightest pain.’

“ There, gentlemen of the jury, is the simple story of this murder. What more can be said in its defense? He respected his second wife blindly because he had respected his first one with reason.”

After a short deliberation, the jury rendered a verdict of acquittal.



## SOLITUDE



UR dinner, a gay, stag affair, was just over. One of my old friends said to me:

“ Let us walk up the Champs-Élysées! ”

We started off, sauntering along under the budding trees. All was quiet, except for the low continuous rumble so characteristic of Paris.

A light breeze was fanning our faces, and thousands of stars dotted the dark sky like a golden dust.

My companion said:

“ I don't know why, but I breathe better here, at night, than in any other place. My mind seems to broaden out. At times, just for a second, it seems to me as though the divine secret of life were about to be discovered. Then the light goes out, and all is over! ”

From time to time we could see two forms softly slip by us along the bordering hedge. We were passing in front of a bench, where a couple were seated side by side, making a dark spot.

My friend murmured:

“ Poor people! It is not disgust but an immense pity which I feel for them. Of all the mysteries of human life, there is one which I have thoroughly investigated: our great misery comes from being alone, and all our efforts and all our acts only tend to escape this solitude. Those two lovers on the bench, in the open air, are trying, like all living creatures, to put at least a temporary stop to their loneliness; but they are, and always shall be, alone, just as you and I.

“ One notices it more or less, that’s all.

“ For some time I have been suffering the abominable torture of having understood, of having discovered, the awful isolation in which I live, and I know that nothing can stop it—nothing, you understand!

“ Whatever we attempt or do, whatever may be the impulse of our hearts, the cry of our lips, the clasp of our arms, we are always alone!

“ I drag you out for this walk to-night, in order not to return home, because I am suffering terribly at present from the loneliness of my house. What good will it do me? I am speaking to you, you are listening to me, and we are both of us alone—side by side, but alone. Do you understand me?

“ Happy are the simple-minded, say the Scriptures. They have the illusion of happiness. They do not feel the same lonely misery that we do; they do not, as I do, wander through life without any other than superficial contact, without any other joy than the selfish satisfaction of understanding, of seeing, and of suffering endlessly from the knowledge of our eternal isolation.

“ You think I am crazy, don’t you?

“ Listen. For a year I have felt the loneliness of my life, each day I seemed to be sinking deeper

and deeper into a dark pit whose edges I cannot find, whose bottom I cannot touch. I am in there alone, with nobody near me, no living creature taking the same gloomy journey. This pit is Life. At times I seem to hear noises, voices, cries—groping my way, I slowly move toward this confused disturbance. But I never find it, I never meet anyone, I never find another hand stretched out in the surrounding darkness. Do you understand?

“Some men have, at times, realized this solitude.

“Musset cried:

“ ‘Who comes? Who calls me? No one!  
I am alone.—The hour has come.  
What loneliness! What wretchedness!’

“But with him it was only a passing doubt, and not a definite certitude as it is with me. He was a poet; his life was full of fantastic dreams. He was never truly alone. I am!

“Gustave Flaubert, who was one of the great sufferers of this world, because he was a clear thinker, wrote these hopeless words to a friend: ‘We are all of us in a desert. No one understands anyone else.’

“True, no one understands anyone else, whatever he may think, say, or attempt. Does the earth know what is happening in the stars, which are scattered through space like sparks, some of them so distant that all we can do is dimly to perceive their light, others so far off that they are lost in the infinite, and yet they may be as close together as the molecules of a body?

“Well, man knows no more about his neighbor. We are as far away from one another as these stars, more isolated, especially because thought is unfathomable.

“ Do you know anything more terrible than constant intercourse with people whom we will never be able to understand? We love one another as though we were chained right near together, with arms outstretched, but unable to approach any closer. We are constantly tortured by the desire to come nearer to one another, but our efforts remain unavailing, our anger vain, our confidences fruitless, our embraces without power, our caresses without hope. When we wish to mingle, our rushing toward one another only makes us bump together.

“ I never feel more alone than when I am opening my heart to some friend, because then I understand better the impassable barrier which exists between us. He is there, I see his eyes looking into mine, but the soul which is behind—that I can never know. He is listening to me. What does he think? Yes, what does he think? Do you understand this torment? Perhaps he hates me, or despises me; perhaps he is laughing at me. He thinks over what I tell him, judges me, scoffs at me, calls me a fool. How can I find out what he thinks? How can I find out whether he loves me as I love him, and what is happening in that little round head? What a dark mystery is this, the unknown thought of a creature, hidden and free! We can never know it, guide it, command it, nor conquer it!

“ I have tried my level best to open all the doors of my soul, to make myself understood. Yet away down in the bottom there is the secret which nobody can fathom. Nobody can discover it, understand it, because nobody resembles me, because no one understands anyone else.

“ Do you understand me yourself, at this moment? No, you think I am mad! You are examining me, you are wary of me! You say to yourself:



'What is the matter with him to-night?' But if, sometime in the future, you should manage to grasp my horrible and subtle suffering, just come to me and say: '*I have understood you!*' and you may make me happy for a second.

"It is women who best make me understand my solitude. How they have made me suffer, because they, more than men, have given me the illusion of not being alone!

"When in love, man seems to broaden out. A superhuman happiness fills his soul! Do you know why? Do you know whence comes this feeling of great joy? It is solely because we imagine ourselves no longer alone. The isolation, the great loneliness appears to cease. What a mistake!

"You know those delightful hours spent face to face with this creature with long hair and delicate features, and whose glance maddens us. What folly takes hold of our minds! What illusion carries us away!

"It seems as though, in a few minutes, she and I would be one! But this time never comes, and after weeks of waiting, of hoping and of deceitful joy, I suddenly find myself even more lonely than ever before. After each kiss, after each embrace, the gulf widens. It is tantalizing, terrible!

"Then, farewell, all is over! You hardly recognize this woman who has been so much to you during a period of your life, and whose thoughts you have never known! At the very time when it seems that, through some mysterious accord, each had descended into the very depth of the other's soul, one little word shows us our error, shows us, like a flash of lightning in the dark night, the black abyss between us.

"And yet, perhaps the most delightful thing in the world is to spend an evening with a beloved

woman, without talking, completely happy by the sole sensation of her presence. Let us not ask more, for two creatures never mingle completely.

“As for me, now, I have closed my soul. I no longer tell anyone what I think, what I believe and what I love. Knowing myself condemned to this appalling loneliness, I observe things, without ever giving my opinion. What do I care for opinions, pleasures, creeds! Not being able to share anything with anyone, I have lost interest in everything. My hidden thoughts remain an eternal secret. I have commonplace answers for every-day questions, and a smile which says ‘yes,’ when I do not even wish to take the trouble to answer.

“Do you understand me?”

We had gone up the long avenue to the Arc de Triomphe, and back again to the Place de la Concorde, for he had said all this very slowly, adding many details which I cannot remember at present.

He stopped, and, suddenly stretching his arm towards the great granite obelisk, standing like a sentinel in the center of Paris, this exiled monument, bearing on its sides the history of its country written in strange characters, he cried:

“There! We are all like that!”

Then he left me without another word.

Was he intoxicated, crazy or very wise? I have not yet found out. At times it seems to me that he was right, and then, again, I think he must have lost his mind.





## GRAVEYARD SIRENS



THE five friends had finished their dinner; they were middle-aged men of the world, rich, three of them married, the other two bachelors. They met thus every month, in memory of their youth, and, after dinner, they chatted away until early in the morning. Friends since early youth, they enjoyed being together, and these were perhaps the pleasantest evenings of their lives. They would talk about everything which interests and amuses Parisians; their conversation was, for the most part, a recapitulation of the news obtained from the daily newspapers.

One of the gayest was Joseph de Bardon, a bachelor who lived and enjoyed Parisian life to its fullest. He was neither a reveler nor a degenerate, but he was curious and still enjoyed the vigor of youth, for he had not yet reached two-score

years. A man of the world in the broadest and best sense of the word, gifted with great wit without depth, with a varied knowledge without real learning, with a quick perception without serious insight, he drew from his observations, from his adventures, from everything which he saw, met and found, comic and philosophic anecdotes and witty remarks which gave him throughout the town a reputation of intelligence.

He was the orator of the evening. Each time he had his story, on which they counted. He began to tell it without even being asked.

Smoking, his elbows resting on the table, half a glass of brandy resting before his plate, in the smoky atmosphere filled with the aroma of coffee, he seemed completely at ease, just as some beings seem absolutely at home in certain places and at certain times, as, for instance, a nun in a chapel, or a goldfish in a bowl.

Slowly exhaling the fragrant smoke of his after-dinner cigar, he said:

“A rather peculiar adventure happened to me a short while ago.”

In one voice, they all exclaimed:

“Tell us about it.”

He continued:

“With pleasure. You know that I have a habit of walking around Paris, like book collectors in search of rare editions. I take notice of what occurs, of the people, of all who pass, and of everything which happens.

“Well, one afternoon, toward the middle of September, when the weather was at its best, I left home, without caring in which direction I went. We always feel a vague desire to call on some pretty woman. We run over our mental index of acquaintances,

weigh the interest and charm with which they inspire us, and decide according to the favorite of the day. But when the sun is beautiful and the air is warm, we often lose all desire for visits.

“ The sun was beautiful and the air was warm; I lighted a cigar and I strolled along aimlessly in the direction of the Outer Boulevard. Then, as I was wandering along, the idea came to me to go as far as the Montmartre Cemetery.

“ I like cemeteries; they rest me and make me sad. And then, there are so many good friends in there, whom we shall never see again; I always go there from time to time.

“ It happens that in this Montmartre Cemetery I have a sweetheart, a charming little woman whom I really loved and the memory of whom makes me sad and gives me regrets—regrets of every kind. I go and dream over her last resting-place—all is over for her.

“ And then, I like cemeteries because they are enormous cities with a great population. Just think of the number of bodies that lie in this little enclosure, of the generations of Parisians who will live there forever, closed up in their little vaults, or buried under the earth with a stone placed at their heads to identify their last home, while the living ones take up so much room and make so much noise.

“ And in the cemeteries there are monuments which are almost as interesting as those which are to be found in museums. Although it cannot be compared to it, the tomb of Cavaignac reminded me, I must admit, of that masterpiece of Jean Goujon: the body of Louis de Brézé, in the underground chapel of the Cathedral of Rouen; all, so called, modern and realistic art has come from there, gentlemen. This dead Louis de Brézé is more real, more terrible, more

convulsed by agony than all the statuary which is put on all the tombs to-day.

"But in the cemetery of Montmartre one can still admire the monument of Baudin, which has a certain amount of grandeur, that of Gautier, that of Murger, where, the other day, I saw one solitary wreath, put there by whom? By his last sweetheart, now old and perhaps a janitress in the neighborhood? It is a pretty little statue by Millet, but which neglect and dirt are spoiling. Sing of Youth, oh, Murger!

"Well, I entered the cemetery of Montmartre, and was overcome by a grief which was not very disagreeable, the kind which, when you feel well, makes you think: 'This place is none too gay, but, thank goodness, my time has not yet come!'

"The impression of autumn, of that moist warmth, which smells of dead leaves, and the weak, tired, lifeless sun enhanced the poetry of the sensation of solitude which hangs over this last resting-place of man.

"I sauntered along slowly through these streets of tombs, where neighbors do not gossip, do not quarrel and do not read the papers. I began to read the epitaphs. Really, that's the funniest thing in the world. Never could Labiche or Meilhac make me laugh as does the comical prose on the tombstones. For random reading, those marble slabs and those crosses, where relatives of the dead have poured out their grief, their wishes for the future happiness of the deceased and their hopes to join them, are far superior to Paul de Kock.

"But the spot which I love, in this cemetery, is the abandoned section, solitary, full of large yew and cypress trees, the old quarter of ancient dead which will soon become a new quarter, whose great

green trees, nourished by human bodies, will be cut down in order to lay out new corpses under little marble slabs.

“ When I had wandered around there for a while, I saw that I was going to find it dull and that I would have to bring to the last resting-place of my little friend my sincere tribute to her memory. On arriving near her, I felt quite sad. Poor darling, she was so gentle, so loving, so white and fresh—and now—if that place were to be opened——

“ Bending over the iron railing, I whispered my troubles to her, which she doubtless did not hear, and I was just about to leave when I saw a woman in black, in deep mourning, who was kneeling at the neighboring plot. Her crape veil had been lifted and showed a pretty blonde head, whose golden tresses under the dark headgear seemed tinged with the first light of dawn. I stood there.

“ Suddenly she seemed to be suffering from a deep grief. She had buried her face in her hands, and, as rigid as a statue, lost in her regrets, telling over her rosary, she seemed herself a dead woman thinking of the deceased. Then, suddenly, I guessed that she was going to cry—I guessed it by a little movement of her back like a shiver. At first she wept silently, then stronger and stronger, with a rapid twitching of neck and shoulders. Suddenly she uncovered her eyes. They were full of tears and charming, wild eyes which looked around as though awakening from a nightmare. She saw me looking at her, seemed ashamed and once more hid her face in her hands. Then her sobs became convulsive, and her head slowly drooped toward the marble. She leaned her forehead against it, and the folds of her veil, spreading around her, covered the white angles of the beloved monument like a new wreath of

mourning. I heard her moan, then she sank down, her cheek against the slab, and remained motionless, unconscious.

"Instinctively I started toward her, I slapped the palms of her hands, blew on her eyes, and, at the same time, read this simple epitaph: 'Here lies Louis Théodore Carrel, captain of marines, killed by the enemy in Tonkin. Pray for him.'

"This death was only a few months old. I was moved to tears, and I redoubled my cares. They were successful; she regained consciousness. I seemed very sad. I understood from her first look that she would be polite and grateful. She was; and with more tears, her story came out by fragments: the death of the officer in Tonkin at the end of a year of married life, after a love match, for, having neither father nor mother, she only had the regulation dowry.

"I consoled, comforted and lifted her to her feet. Then I said to her:

" 'Do not stay here. Come.'

"She murmured:

" 'I feel unable to walk.'

" 'I will support you.'

" 'Thank you, sir, you are very kind. Were you also mourning for a deceased one?'

" 'Yes, Madame.'

" 'A woman?'

" 'Yes, Madame.'

" 'Your wife?'

" 'A friend.'

" 'One can love a friend as much as a wife. Passion knows no law.'

" 'Yes, Madame.'

"She took my arm, and we started off together. I almost carried her through the walks of the ceme-



tery. When we were outside, she murmured in a weak voice:

“ ‘ I am feeling very faint.’ ”

“ ‘ Would you like to go some place and take something? ’ ”

“ ‘ Yes, Monsieur.’ ”

“ I noticed a restaurant, one of those places where the friends of the dead go to recuperate from their exertions. We went inside. I ordered for her a cup of hot tea, which seemed to revive her. A vague smile appeared on her lips. She spoke to me of herself. It was so sad, so lonesome being all alone at home, day and night, having no one to love or confide in, no intimacy with anyone.

“ She looked sincere. The words sounded so sweet from her mouth. I grew tender. She was very young, perhaps twenty. I paid her some compliments, which she accepted very well. Then, as the time was passing, I offered to take her home in a cab. She accepted; and in the carriage we sat so close to each other, shoulder to shoulder, that the warmth of our bodies mingled through our clothes, which is one of the most distracting things in the world.

“ When the carriage had stopped at her house, she murmured: ‘ I really feel unable to go upstairs alone, for I live on the fourth floor. You have already been so kind, would you mind giving me your arm up to my apartment? ’ ”

“ I hastened to accept. She went up slowly, breathing with difficulty. Then, at her door, she added:

“ ‘ Wouldn’t you like to step inside for a minute, in order that I may thank you? ’ ”

“ Of course I accepted.

“ The apartment was very modest, even a little poor, but simply and tastefully arranged.

" We sat down side by side on a little sofa, and she once more spoke to me of her loneliness.

" She rang for the servant, in order to offer me something to drink. The girl did not come. I was delighted, hoping that this maid might be one of those women who only come in the morning to clear up and then leave.

" She had taken off her hat. She was really charming with her bright eyes fastened on me, so charming that I had a terrible temptation, and I yielded to it. I seized her in my arms, and on her eyes, which suddenly closed, I rained kisses—kisses—kisses.

" She fought and pushed me away, repeating:

" ' Stop—stop—end it! '

" What could she mean by this word? In such cases ' end ' can have at least two meanings. In order to quiet her, I passed from her eyes to her mouth, and I imparted to the word ' end ' the meaning which I preferred. She did not resist too much, and when we once more looked at each other, after this outrage to the memory of the captain killed in Tonkin, she had a languishing, tender, resigned look which dispelled all my fears.

" Then I was gallant, eager and thankful. And after another conversation, which lasted about an hour, I asked her:

" ' Where do you dine? '

" ' In a little restaurant in the neighborhood. '

" ' All alone? '

" ' Yes, of course. '

" ' Will you dine with me? '

" ' Where? '

" ' In a good restaurant along the Boulevard. '

" She resisted a little. I insisted. She gave in, calming herself with the following argument: ' I am

so terribly, terribly lonely; ' then she added: ' But I must put on a less gloomy dress.'

" She went into her bedroom.

" When she came out again, she was wearing a delightful, gray, second-mourning costume, neat and simple. She evidently had cemetery and street dresses.

" The dinner was most pleasant. She drank champagne, grew bright and lively, and I went home with her.

" This friendship, started on the graves, lasted for about three weeks. But one tires of everything and especially of women. I left her on the pretext of an indispensable journey. I was very generous at my departure and she thanked me warmly. She made me promise, swear, to come back after my return, for she seemed really to care for me.

" I went in search of new love, and about a month went by without my feeling any desire to visit this little graveyard sweetheart. However, I did not forget her. Her memory haunted me like a mystery, like a psychological problem, like one of those inexplicable questions the solution of which worries us.

" I don't know why, but one day I imagined that I might see her in the Montmartre Cemetery, and I went there.

" For a long time I walked around without meeting any others than the ordinary visitors, those who have not yet severed all bonds with their dead.

" But, as I wandered away in another section of this great city of the dead, I noticed suddenly, at the end of a narrow walk a couple in deep mourning approaching in my direction. Oh, astonishment! When they had come up to me, I recognized the woman. It was she!

" She saw me, blushed, and, as I passed beside

her, she gave me an imperceptible wink which seemed to mean: 'Do not recognize me,' but which also meant: 'Come back to see, darling.'

"The man was distinguished-looking, stylish, an officer of the Legion of Honor, about fifty years of age.

"He was supporting her as I myself had done, under similar conditions.

"I left bewildered, wondering at what I had just seen. To what race might this sepulchral huntress belong? Was she an ordinary common girl who went to pluck from the graves sad men, haunted by the memories of their wives or sweethearts, and still upset by the remembrance of vanished caresses? Was she alone? Are there many? Is it a profession? Do they walk the cemetery the same as they do the streets? Graveyard sirens! Or had she alone had this admirable idea, from a deep philosophy, of taking advantage of the regrets of love which these funereal places inspire?

"I would have given much to know whose widow she was that day!"



## CHECKMATE



WAS going to Turin by way of Corsica.

At Nice I took the boat for Bastia, and as soon as we were started I noticed a rather pretty, modest-looking young woman seated on the deck. She was looking away into the distance with a far-away expression in her eyes.

I seated myself opposite her and looked at her, asking myself the questions which come to one's mind on seeing an unknown woman who interests you: What was her condition, her age, her disposition? Then through what you see you guess what you do not know. With your eyes you notice the length of the bust when she is seated, you try to discover her ankle, you observe the quality of the hand and the ear, which indicates origin better than a birth certificate. You try to hear her speak in order to penetrate the nature of her mind and the tendencies of her heart through the intonations of her voice. For the quality of the voice and the choice of words unfold to an experienced observer the whole mysterious texture of the soul.

I was therefore attentively observing my neighbor, looking for signs, analyzing gestures, expecting a revelation at every minute.

She opened a little bag and drew out a news-

paper. I rubbed my hands: "Tell me what you read, and I will tell you what you think."

She began to read with a look of pleasure and of relish. The title of the sheet was the *Echo de Paris*. I was perplexed. She was reading an article by Scholl. Was she a Schollist? She began to smile. Was she one of his opponents? It was difficult to make her out.

I sat down beside her and began to read, with no less attention, a volume of poetry which I had bought before leaving, the "Song of Love," by Felix Frank.

I noticed that she took in the title with a rapid glance, just as a flying bird snatches up a fly. Several of the passengers passed by in order to look at her. But she seemed only to be thinking of her article. When she had finished it, she laid the paper down between us.

Bowing, I said to her.

"Madame, may I glance at this paper?"

"Certainly, sir."

"In the meanwhile, allow me to offer you this volume of verse."

"Thank you, sir; is it amusing?"

I was a bit disturbed by this question. One does not ask of a volume of verse whether it is amusing. I answered:

"It is better than that, it is charming, delicate and very artistic."

"Then let me see it."

She took the volume, opened it and began to glance through it with a little surprised air which showed that she was not in the habit of reading verse.

At times she seemed moved, at other times she smiled, but with a smile different from the one she had when reading the newspaper.

Suddenly I asked her: "Does it please you?"

"Yes, but I like things that are merry, very merry. I am not at all sentimental."

We began to talk. I found out that she was the wife of a captain of dragoons, stationed at Ajaccio, and that she was going to join her husband.

In a few minutes I had found out that she did not love him any too much. She loved him, nevertheless, but reservedly, as one loves a man who has not lived up to what was expected before marriage. He had trotted her from garrison to garrison, through a lot of sad little villages. Now he was calling her to this dismal island. No, life was not amusing for everybody. She would even have preferred remaining with her parents in Lyons, for there she knew everybody. But now she had to go to Corsica. Really, the Secretary of War was not at all nice to her husband.

We spoke of the places in which she would have preferred to live, and I asked:

"Do you like Paris?"

She exclaimed:

"Oh! Monsieur, do I love Paris? Is it possible to ask such a question?" And she began to talk to me of Paris with such ardor, such enthusiasm, such envy, that I thought to myself: "That's the string to play on."

She adored Paris from a distance with the exasperated passion of a woman from the country, with the wild impatience of a captive bird which is watching a forest all day from the window in which his cage is hung.

She began to question me hurriedly; she wished to learn everything in five minutes. She knew the names of all the well-known people, and of many others of whom I had never heard.

"How is Gounod? and Sardou? Oh! Monsieur, I do so love Sardou's plays! They are so gay and witty! Each time I see one of them I dream of it for a week! I also read one of Daudet's books, which pleased me so much! *Sapho*, do you know it? Is Daudet handsome? Have you seen Daudet? And Zola, what kind of a man is he? If you knew how *Germinal* made me cry! Do you remember where the little child dies in the darkness? Isn't it terrible! I was almost sick after reading it! I also read a book by Monsieur Bourget, *Cruelle Enigme*. I have a girl cousin who went so wild about that novel that she wrote to Bourget. I found that book too poetic. I prefer funny things. Do you know Monsieur Grévin? And Monsieur Coquelin? And Monsieur Damala? And Monsieur Rochefort? They say he is so witty! And Monsieur de Cassagnac? I heard that he has a duel every day!"

After about an hour, this rapid-fire questioning began to slow down; and having satisfied her curiosity to the full extent of my fantastical imagination, I was at liberty to pick my own subjects of conversation.

I told her stories of the gay Parisian life. She drank them in with both eyes and ears. She must certainly have conceived a strange idea of the great, well-known ladies of Paris. They were all stories of clandestine appointments, rapid victories and passionate defeats. From time to time she would ask me:

"Oh! is that the way they live?"

I answered with a sly smile:

"Of course, the average middle-class families lead an uneventful, monotonous life, respecting a virtue which no one appreciates."



I began ironically to philosophize about virtue. I talked carelessly of the poor fools who go through life without ever having known the good, sweet things, without ever having tasted the delicious pleasures of stolen kisses, so passionate and fervid, because they have married some stick of a husband whose marital modesty has allowed them to spend their lives in total ignorance of refined sensuousness and of delicate sentiment.

Then I began to tell her anecdotes, stories of little private dinners, of intrigues which I claimed were known the world over. The refrain was always the same, it was always discreet, veiled praise of sudden and hidden love, of the sensation stolen like a fruit, while passing by, and forgotten as soon as it is over.

Night came on, calm and warm. The great vessel, trembling under the impulse of its massive machinery, was gliding over the seas, under the immense star-studded sky.

The little woman was silent. She was breathing slowly and sometimes sighing. Suddenly she arose:

"I am going to bed," she said; "good night, Monsieur."

She shook hands with me.

I knew that she expected to take, the next evening, the coach which goes from Bastia to Ajaccio through the mountains, and which stays over night on the way.

I answered:

"Good night, Madame."

I then went to my cabin.

The next morning early I reserved all three seats in the coach for myself, alone.

At nightfall, as I was climbing into the old wagon which was about to leave Bastia, the driver asked me

if I would be willing to give up a little room to a lady. I asked gruffly:

"To what lady?"

"To an officer's wife who is going to Ajaccio."

"Tell this person that I will willingly give her a seat."

She arrived, having spent the day sleeping, as she said. She excused herself, thanked me and climbed in.

This wagon was a kind of hermetically sealed box, getting no light except through its two doors. There we were, face to face in the interior. The horses were going at a lively trot; then we got into the mountains. A fresh and penetrating odor of aromatic herbs drifted in through the open windows, that strong smell which Corsica spreads around itself so far that the sailors can recognize it on the sea, so subtle that it is hard to analyze it. I started once more to speak of Paris, and she listened to me again with feverish attention. My stories became bolder and full of those veiled words which stir the blood.

Night had fallen completely. I could no longer see anything, not even the white spot which, a minute ago, the young woman's face made in the darkness. Alone, the driver's lantern lighted the four horses, which were slowly climbing.

From time to time the rumbling noise of a mountain torrent, rushing through the rocks, came to us mingled with the noise of the bells on the horses, then it was soon lost in the distance behind us.

Slowly I advanced my foot and met hers, which she did not remove. Then I no longer moved, and suddenly I began to talk of tenderness and of affection. I had advanced my hand and met hers. She did not remove that either. I kept on talking, nearer

to her ear, very close to her mouth. I already felt her heart beating against my breast. It was beating fast and strong—good sign; then, slowly, I placed my lips on her neck, sure that I held her, so sure that I would have staked my life on it.

But suddenly she gave a start, as though she had just waked up, such a start that I flew over to the other side of the carriage. Then, before I had had time to understand, to think of anything, I first received five or six terrible slaps in the face, and then a shower of punches, which came to me hard and heavy, hitting me everywhere, without my being able to ward them off in the dense obscurity which surrounded this struggle.

I stretched out my hands, trying vainly to seize her arms. Then, no longer knowing what to do, I turned around quickly, presenting to her furious attack only my back, and hiding my head in a corner of the cushioned seats.

She seemed to understand, perhaps by the sound of the blows, this ruse of a desperate man, and she stopped hitting me.

After a few minutes she went back to her corner, and kept sobbing as though her heart would break for at least an hour.

I had sat down again, very uneasy and ashamed. I would have liked to talk to her, but what could I say? I could think of nothing! Make excuses? That would be stupid! What would you have said? Nothing, you may be sure.

She was heaving great sighs now, which affected me and distressed me. I would have liked to console her, to kiss her, as one kisses a sorrowing child, to beg her pardon, to throw myself at her feet, but I did not dare.

Those situations are very annoying!

At last she became calmer, and each of us remained in his corner, motionless and speechless, while the carriage kept on, stopping from time to time for new relays. Then we would both quickly close our eyes, so as not to see each other when the bright rays of a stable lantern penetrated our Stygian darkness. Then the coach would start again, and the sweet perfumed air of the Corsican mountains caressing my cheeks and lips intoxicated me like wine.

By Jove! what a wonderful trip it would have been if my companion had not been so foolish.

Slowly daylight began to creep into the carriage, the pale light of early dawn. I looked at my neighbor. She was pretending to sleep. Then the sun, having risen behind the mountains, soon covered with light an immense blue gulf, surrounded by enormous granite-capped peaks.

My neighbor then pretended to awake. She opened her eyes (they were red); she opened her mouth as though to yawn, just as though she had slept for a long time. Then she hesitated, blushed and stammered:

“ Shall we soon be there? ”

“ Yes, Madame, in less than an hour.”

She continued, looking out in the distance:

“ It’s very tiresome to spend the night in a carriage.”

“ Yes, it makes one quite lame.”

“ Especially after a trip on the water.”

“ Oh! yes.”

“ Is that Ajaccio ahead of us? ”

“ Yes, Madame.”

“ I wish we were there.”

“ I understand that.”

The sound of her voice was a little troubled, her

manner a little embarrassed, her eye a little shifty. However, she seemed to have forgotten everything.

I admired her. How instinctively artful those little minxes are! What diplomats!

After about an hour we arrived; and a big dragon, built like a Hercules, standing before the office, waved his handkerchief on discovering the carriage.

My neighbor threw her arms around his neck and kissed him at least twenty times, repeating:

"How are you, honey? I was so anxious to see you!"

My trunk had been taken from the top of the coach, and I was discreetly retreating when she called me back:

"Oh, Monsieur, are you leaving without saying good-by to me?"

I stammered: "Madame, I was leaving you to your joy."

Then she said to her husband: "Darling, thank Monsieur; he was charming to me throughout the whole trip. He even offered me a seat in the carriage, which he had reserved for himself. It is a pleasure to meet such agreeable companions."

The husband shook my hand, thanking me effusively.

The young woman smiled as she watched us together—I must have looked like a fool!





## DISCOVERY



HE steamer was crowded with people and the crossing promised to be good. I was going from Havre to Trouville.

The ropes were thrown off, the whistle blew for the last time, the whole boat started to tremble, and the great wheels began to revolve, slowly at first, and then with ever-increasing rapidity.

We were gliding along the pier, black with people. Those on board were waving their handkerchiefs, as though they were leaving for America, and their friends on shore were answering in the same manner.

The big July sun was shining down on the red parasols, the light dresses, the joyous faces, and on the ocean, barely stirred by a ripple. When we were out of the harbor, the little vessel swung around the big curve and pointed her nose toward the distant shore which was barely visible through the early morning mist. On our left was the broad estuary of the Seine, her muddy water, which never mingles with that of the ocean, making large yellow streaks clearly outlined against the immense sheet of the pure green sea.

As soon as I am on a boat I feel the need of walking to and fro, like a sailor on watch. Why? I do not know. Therefore I began to thread my way along the deck through the crowd of travelers. Suddenly I heard my name called. I turned around. I beheld one of my old friends, Henri Sidoine, whom I had not seen for ten years.

We shook hands, and continued our walk, together, talking of one thing or another. Suddenly Sidoine, who had been observing the crowd of passengers, cried out angrily:

"It's disgusting; the boat is full of English people!"

It was indeed full of them. The men were standing around looking over the ocean with an all-important air, as though to say: "We are the English, the lords of the sea! Here we are!"

The young girls, formless, with shoes which reminded one of the naval constructions of their fatherland, wrapped in multi-colored shawls, were smiling vacantly at the magnificent scenery. Their small heads, planted at the top of their long bodies, wore English hats of the strangest build.

And the old maids, thinner yet, opening their characteristic jaws to the wind, seemed to threaten one with their long, yellow teeth. On passing them, one could notice the smell of rubber and of tooth wash.

Sidoine repeated, with growing anger:

"Disgusting! Can we never stop their coming to France?"

I asked, smiling:

"What have you got against them? As far as I am concerned, they don't worry me."

He snapped out:

"Of course they don't worry you! But *I* married one of them."

I stopped and laughed at him.

"Go ahead and tell me about it. Does she make you very unhappy?"

He shrugged his shoulders:

"No, not exactly."

"Then she—is not true to you?"

"Unfortunately, she is. That would be cause for a divorce, and I could get rid of her."

"Then I'm afraid I don't understand!"

"You don't understand? I'm not surprised. Well, she simply learned how to speak French—that's all! Listen.

"I didn't have the least desire of getting married when I went to spend the summer at Etretat two years ago. There is nothing more dangerous than watering-places. You have no idea how it suits young girls. Paris is the place for women and the country for young girls.

"Donkey rides, surf-bathing, breakfast on the grass, all these things are traps set for the marriageable man. And, really, there is nothing prettier than a child about eighteen running through a field or picking flowers along the road.

"I made the acquaintance of an English family which was stopping at the same hotel where I was. The father looked like those men you see over there, and the mother was like all other Englishwomen.

"They had two sons, the kind of boys who play rough games with balls, bats or rackets from morning till night; then came two daughters, the elder a dry, shriveled-up Englishwoman, the younger a dream of beauty, a heavenly blonde. When those chits make up their minds to be pretty, they are divine. This one had blue eyes, the kind of blue which seems to contain all the poetry, all the dreams, all the hopes and happiness of the world!



“What an infinity of dreams is caused by two such eyes! How well they answer the dim, eternal question of our heart!

“It must not be forgotten either that we Frenchmen adore foreign women. As soon as we meet a Russian, an Italian, a Swede, a Spaniard, or an Englishwoman with a pretty face, we immediately fall in love with her. We enthuse over everything which comes from outside—clothes, hats, gloves, guns and—women. But what a blunder!

“I believe that that which pleases us in foreign women is their accent. As soon as a woman speaks our language badly we think she is charming, if she uses the wrong word she is exquisite, and if she jabbars in an entirely unintelligible jargon, she becomes irresistible.

“My little English girl, Kate, spoke a language to be marveled at. At the beginning I could understand nothing, she invented so many new words; then I fell absolutely in love with this funny, gay dialect. All maimed, strange, ridiculous terms became delightful in her mouth. Every evening, on the terrace of the Casino, we had long conversations which resembled spoken enigmas.

“I married her! I loved her wildly, as one can only love in a dream. For true lovers only love a dream which has taken the form of a woman.

“Well, my dear fellow, the most foolish thing I ever did was to give my wife a French teacher. As long as she slaughtered the dictionary and tortured the grammar I adored her. Our conversations were simple. They revealed to me her surprising gracefulness and matchless elegance; they showed her to me as a wonderful speaking jewel, a living doll made to be kissed, knowing, after a fashion, how to express what she loved. She reminded me of the pretty little

toys which say 'papa' and 'mamma' when you pull a string.

"Now she talks—badly—very badly. She makes as many mistakes as ever—but I can understand her.

"I have opened my doll to look inside—and I have seen. And how I have to talk to her!

"Ah! you don't know, as I do, the opinions, the ideas, the theories of a well-educated young English girl, whom I can blame in nothing, and who repeats to me from morning till night sentences from a French reader prepared in England for the use of young ladies' schools.

"You have seen those cotillon favors, those pretty gilt papers which inclose candies with an abominable taste. I have one of them. I tore it open. I wished to eat what was inside and it disgusted me so that I feel nauseated at seeing her compatriots.

"I have married a parrot to whom some old English governess might have taught French. Do you understand?"

. . . . .

The harbor of Trouville was now showing its wooden piers covered with people.

I said:

"Where is your wife?"

He answered:

"I took her back to Étretat."

"And you, where are you going?"

"I? Oh! I am going to rest up here at Trouville."

Then, after a pause, he added:

"You have no idea what a fool a woman can be at times!"



## THE WAKE



THE woman had died without pain, quietly, as a woman should whose life has been without blame. Now she was resting in her bed, lying on her back, her eyes closed, her features calm, her long white hair carefully arranged as though she had done it up ten minutes before dying; the whole pale countenance of the dead woman was so collected, so calm, so resigned that one could feel what a sweet soul had lived in that body, what a quiet existence this old soul had led, how easy and pure the death of this ancestor had been.

Kneeling beside the bed, her son, a magistrate with inflexible principles, and her daughter, Marguerite, known as Sister Eulalie, were weeping as though their hearts would break. She had, from childhood up, armed them with a strict moral code, teaching them religion without weakness and duty

without compromise. He, the man, had become a judge, and handled the law as a weapon with which he smote the weak ones without pity. She, the girl, influenced by the virtue which had bathed her in this austere family, had become the bride of God through her loathing for man.

They had hardly known their father, knowing only that he had made their mother most unhappy, without being told any other details.

The nun was wildly kissing the dead woman's hand, an ivory hand as white as the large Christ lying across the bed. On the other side of the long body, the other hand seemed still to be holding the sheet in the death grasp; and the sheet had preserved the little creases as a memory of those last movements which precede eternal immobility.

A few light taps on the door caused the two sobbing heads to look up, and the priest, who had just come from dinner, returned. He was red and out of breath from his interrupted digestion, for he had made himself a strong mixture of coffee and brandy in order to combat the fatigue of the last few nights and of the wake which was beginning.

He looked sad, with that assumed sadness of the priest for whom death is a bread-winner. He crossed himself, and approaching with his professional gesture: "Well, my poor children! I have come to help you pass these last sad hours." But Sister Eulalie suddenly arose. "Thank you, father, but my brother and I prefer to remain alone with her. This is our last chance to see her, and we wish to be together, all three of us, as we—we—used to be when we were small and our poor mo—mother—" Grief and tears stopped her, she could not continue.

Once more serene, the priest bowed, thinking of his bed. "As you wish, my children." He kneeled,

crossed himself, prayed, arose, and went out quietly, murmuring: "She was a saint!"

They remained alone, the dead woman and her children. The ticking of the clock, hidden in the shadow, could be heard distinctly, and through the open window drifted in the sweet smell of hay and of woods, together with the soft moonlight. No other noise could be heard over the land except the occasional croaking of the frog or the chirping of some belated insect. An infinite peace, a divine melancholy, a silent serenity surrounded this 'dead woman, seemed to be breathed out from her and to appease nature itself.

Then the judge, still kneeling, his head buried in the bed-clothes, cried in a voice altered by grief and deadened by the sheets and blankets: "Mamma, mamma, mamma!" And his sister, frantically striking her forehead against the woodwork, convulsed, twitching and trembling as in an epileptic fit, moaned: "Jesus, Jesus, mamma, Jesus!" And both of them, shaken by a storm of grief, gasped and choked.

The crisis slowly calmed down and they began to weep quietly, just as on the sea when a calm spell follows a squall.

A rather long time passed, and they arose and looked at their dear dead. And the memories, those distant memories, yesterday so dear; to-day so torturing, came to their minds with all the little forgotten details, those little intimate familiar details, which bring back to life the one who has left. They recalled to each other circumstances, words, smiles, intonations of the mother who was no longer to speak to them. They saw her again happy and calm; they remembered things which she had said, and a little motion of the hand, like beating time, which

she often used when emphasizing something important.

And they loved her as they never had loved her before. They measured the depth of their grief, and thus they discovered how lonesome they would find themselves.

It was their prop, their guide, their whole youth, all the best part of their lives which was disappearing, it was their bond with life, their mother, their mamma, the connecting link with their forefathers which they would thenceforth miss. They now became solitary, lonely beings; they could no longer look back.

The nun said to her brother: " You remember how mamma used always to read her old letters; they are all there in that drawer. Let us, in turn, read them, let us live her whole life to-night beside her! It would be like a road to the cross, like making the acquaintance of her mother, of our grandparents, whom we never knew, but whose letters are there and of whom she so often spoke, do you remember? "



Out of the drawer they took about ten little packages of yellow paper, tied with care and arranged one beside the other. They threw these relics on the bed and chose one of them on which the word " Father " was written; they opened and read it.

It was one of those old-fashioned letters which one finds in old family desk drawers, those epistles which smell of another century. The first one began: " My dear," another one: " My beautiful little girl," others: " My dear child," or: " My dear daughter." And suddenly the nun began to read aloud, to read over to the dead woman her whole

history, all her tender memories. The judge, resting his elbow on the bed, was listening with his eyes fastened on his mother. The motionless body seemed happy.

Sister Eulalie, interrupting herself, said suddenly: "These ought to be put in the grave with her; they ought to be used as a shroud and she ought to be buried in it." She took another package, on which no revealing name was written. She began to read in a firm voice: "My adored one, I love you wildly. Since yesterday I have been suffering the tortures of the damned, haunted by your memory. I feel your lips against mine, your eyes in mine, your breast against mine. I love you, I love you! You have driven me mad. My arms open, I gasp, moved by a wild desire to have you again. My whole soul and body cries out for you, wants you. I have kept in my mouth the taste of your kisses. . . ."

The judge had straightened himself up; the nun stopped reading; he snatched the letter from her hand and looked for the signature. There was none, but only under the words: "The man who adores you," the name: "Henry." Their father's name was René. Therefore this was not from him. The son then quickly rummaged through the package of letters, took one out and read: "I can no longer live without your caresses. . . ." Standing, severe as when sitting on the bench, he looked unmoved at the dead woman. The nun, straight as a statue, the tears stopping in the corners of her eyes, was watching her brother, waiting. Then he crossed the room slowly, went to the window and, with his looks lost in the dark night, he stood still.

When he turned around again, Sister Eulalie, her eyes dry now, was still standing near the bed, her head hanging.

He stepped forward, quickly picked up the letters and threw them pell-mell back into the drawer; then he closed the curtains of the bed.

When daylight made the candles on the table turn pale, the son slowly left his armchair, and without looking again at the mother upon whom he had passed sentence, severing the tie that united her to son and daughter, he said slowly: "Let us now retire, sister."





## SUICIDES

*To Georges Legrand.*



**H**ARDLY a day goes by without reading a news item like the following in some newspaper:

"On Wednesday night the people living at No. 40, Rue de —, were awakened by successive shots. The explosions seemed to come from the apartment occupied by M. X. The door was broken in and the man was found bathed in his blood, still holding in one hand the revolver with which he had taken his life.

"M. X— was fifty-seven years of age, enjoying a comfortable income, and had everything necessary to make him happy. No motive can be found for his action."

What terrible grief, what unknown suffering, what hidden despair, secret wounds drive these presumably happy persons to suicide? We search, we imagine tragedies of love, we suspect financial troubles, and, as we never find anything definite, we apply to these deaths the word "mystery."

A letter found on the desk of one of these suicides without cause," and written during his last night, beside his loaded revolver, has come into my hands. We deem it rather interesting. It reveals none of those great catastrophes which we always expect to find behind these acts of despair; but it shows us the slow succession of the little vexations of life, the disintegration of a lonely existence, v

dreams have disappeared, it gives the reason for these tragic ends, which only nervous and high-strung people can understand.

Here it is:

“ It is midnight. When I have finished this letter I shall kill myself. Why? I shall attempt to give the reasons, not for those who may read these lines, but for myself, to kindle my waning courage, to impress upon myself the fatal necessity of this act which can at best be only deferred.

“ I was brought up by simple-minded parents who were unquestioning believers. And I believed as they did.

“ My dream lasted a long time. The last veil has just been torn from my eyes.

“ During the last few years a strange change has been taking place within me. All the events of life, which formerly had to me all the glow of a beautiful sunset, are now fading away. The true meaning of things has appeared to me in its brutal reality; and the true reason for love has bred in me disgust even for this poetic sentiment: ‘ We are the eternal toys of foolish and charming illusions, which are always being renewed.’

“ Then, on growing older, I had become partly reconciled to the awful mystery of life, to the uselessness of effort, when the emptiness of everything appeared to me in a new light, this evening, after dinner.

“ Formerly, I was happy! Everything pleased me: the passing women, the appearance of the streets, the place where I lived; and I even took an interest in the cut of my clothes. But the repetition of the same sights has had the result of filling my heart with weariness and disgust, just as one would

feel were one to go every night to the same theater.

"For the last thirty years I have been rising at the same hour; and, at the same restaurant, for thirty years I have been eating at the same hours the same dishes brought me by different waiters.

"I have tried travel. The loneliness which one feels in strange places terrified me. I felt so alone, so small on the earth that I quickly started on my homeward journey.

"But here the unchanging expression of my furniture, which has stood for thirty years in the same place, the smell of my apartments (for, with time, each dwelling takes on a particular odor), each night, these and other things disgust me and make me sick of living thus.

"Everything repeats itself endlessly. The way in which I put my key in the lock, the place where I always find my matches, the first object which meets my eye when I enter the room, make me feel like jumping out of the window and putting an end to those monotonous events from which we can never escape.

"Each day, when I shave, I feel an inordinate desire to cut my throat; and my face, always the same, which I see in the little mirror, with soap on my cheeks, has several times made me weak from sadness.

"Now I even hate to be with people whom I used to meet with pleasure: I know them so well, I can tell just what they are going to say and what I am going to answer. Each brain is like a circus, where the same horse keeps circling around eternally. We must circle around always, around the same ideas, the same joys, the same pleasures, the same habits, the same beliefs, the same sensations of disgust.

"The fog was terrible this evening. It wrapped

up the Boulevard, where the street lights were darkened and looked like smoking candles. A heavier weight than usual pressed down on my shoulders. Perhaps my digestion was bad.

"For good digestion is everything in life. It gives the inspiration to the artist, amorous desires to young people, clear ideas to thinkers, the joy of life to everybody, and it also allows one to eat much (which is one of the greatest pleasures). A sick stomach induces skepticism, unbelief, nightmares and desires for death. I have often noticed this fact. Perhaps I would not kill myself if my digestion had been good this evening.

"When I sat down in the armchair where I have been sitting every day for thirty years, I glanced around me, and just then I was seized by such a terrible distress that I thought I must go mad.

"I tried to think of what I could do to run away from myself. Every occupation struck me as being worse even than inaction. Then I bethought me of putting a little order in my papers.

"For a long time I have been thinking of clearing out my drawers; for, for the last thirty years, I have been throwing my letters and bills pell-mell into the same desk, and this confusion has often caused me considerable trouble. But I feel such moral and physical laziness at the sole idea of putting anything in order, that I have never had the courage to begin this tedious business.

"I therefore opened my desk, intending to choose among my old papers and destroy the majority of them.

"At first I was bewildered by this array of documents, yellowed by age, then I chose one.

"Oh! if you cherish life, never disturb the burying-ground of old letters!

“ And if, perchance, you should, take the contents by the handful, close your eyes that you may not read a word, so that you may not recognize some forgotten handwriting which may dash you suddenly into a sea of memories; carry these papers to the fire; and when they are in ashes, crush them to an invisible powder, or otherwise you are lost—just as I have been lost for an hour.

“ The first letters which I read did not interest me greatly. They were recent, and came from living men whom I still meet often enough and whose presence does not move me to any great extent. But suddenly one envelope made me start. My name was traced on it in a large, bold handwriting; and suddenly tears came to my eyes. That one was from my dearest friend, the companion of my youth, the confidant of my hopes; and he appeared before me so clearly, with his pleasant smile and his hand outstretched, that a cold shiver ran down my back. Yes, yes, the dead came back, for I saw him! Our memory is a more perfect world than the universe: it gives back life to those who no longer exist.

“ With trembling hand and dimmed eyes I re-read everything that he told me, and in my poor sobbing heart I felt a wound so painful that I began to groan as a man whose bones were slowly being crushed.

“ Then I traveled over my whole life, just as one travels along a river. I recognized people, so long forgotten that I no longer knew their names. Alone their faces lived in me. In the letters of my mother I found again the old servants, the shape of our house, and the little, insignificant odds and ends which stick in our minds.

“ Yes, I suddenly saw again all my mother's old gowns, the different styles which she adopted and

the several ways in which she dressed her hair. She haunted me especially in a silk dress trimmed with old lace; and I remembered a thing which she had told me one day when she was wearing this dress. She had said: 'Robert, my child, if you do not stand up straight you will be round-shouldered all your life.'

"Then, opening another drawer, I found myself face to face with memories of tender passions: a dancing-pump, a torn handkerchief, even a garter, locks of hair and dried flowers. Then the sweet romances of my life, whose living heroines are now white-haired, plunged me into the deep melancholy of things. Oh, the young brows where blond locks curl, the caress of the hands, the glance which speaks, the hearts which beat, that smile which promises the lips, those lips which promise the embrace! And the first kiss—that endless kiss which makes you close your eyes, which drowns all thought in the immeasurable joy of approaching possession!

"Taking these old pledges of former love in both my hands, I covered them with furious caresses, and in my soul, torn by these memories, I saw them each again at the hour of surrender; and I suffered a torture more cruel than all the tortures invented in all the fables about hell.

"One last letter remained. It was written by me and dictated fifty years ago by my penmanship teacher. Here it is:

" 'MY DEAR LITTLE MAMMA:

" 'I am to-day seven years old. It is the age of reason. I take advantage of it to thank you for having brought me into this world.

" 'Your little son, who loves you.

" 'ROBERT.'

"That was all. I had arrived at the beginning, and suddenly I looked forward to the rest of my

days. I saw hideous and lonely old age, and approaching infirmities, and everything over and gone. And nobody near me!

“ My revolver is here, on the table. I load it. Never re-read your old letters! ”

And that is how many men kill themselves; and we search in vain to discover some great sorrow in their lives.





## THE GAMEKEEPER



It was after dinner, and we were talking about adventures and accidents which happened while hunting.

An old friend, known to all of us, M. Boniface, a great hunter and connoisseur of good wine, a man of wonderful physique, witty and gay, and endowed with an ironical and resigned philosophy, which manifested itself always by biting wit and never by sadness, suddenly exclaimed:

“I know a story, or rather a tragedy, which is somewhat peculiar. It is not at all like those which one hears of usually, and I have never told it, thinking that it would interest no one.

“It is not at all sympathetic. I mean by that, that it does not arouse the kind of interest which pleases or which moves one agreeably.

“Here is the story:

“I was then about thirty-five years of age, and a most enthusiastic hunter.

“In those days I owned a lonely bit of property in the neighborhood of Jumièges, surrounded by forests and abounding in hares and rabbits. I was accustomed to spending four or five days, alone, there each year, there not being room enough to allow of my bringing a friend with me.



"I had placed there as gamekeeper an old retired *gendarme*, a good man, hot-tempered, a severe disciplinarian, a terror to poachers and fearing nothing. He lived all alone, far from the village, in a little house, or rather hut, consisting of two rooms downstairs, with kitchen and store-room, and two upstairs. One of them, a kind of box just large enough to accommodate a bed, a cupboard and a chair, was reserved for my use.

"Old man Cavalier lived in the other one. When I said that he was alone in this place, I was wrong. He had taken his nephew with him, a young scamp about fourteen years old, who used to go to the village and run errands for the old man.

"This young scapegrace was long and lanky, with yellow hair, so light that it resembled the fluff of a plucked chicken, so thin that he seemed bald. Besides this, he had enormous feet and the hands of a giant.

"He was cross-eyed, and never looked at anyone. He struck me as being in the same relation to the human race as ill-smelling beasts are to the animal race. He reminded me of a polecat.

"He slept in a kind of hole at the top of the stairs which led to the two rooms.

"But during my short stops at the Pavilion—so I called the hut—Marius would give up his nook to an old woman from Ecorcheville, called Céleste, who used to come and cook for me, as old man Cavalier's stews were not sufficient for my healthy appetite.

"You now know the characters and the locality. Here is the story:

"It was on the fifteenth of October, 1854—I shall remember that date as long as I live.

"I left Rouen on horseback, followed by my dog Bock, a big brach-hound from Poitou, full-chested

and large-mouthed, which could fetch like a spaniel.

"I was carrying my satchel behind me and my gun swung over my shoulder. It was a cold, windy, gloomy day, with clouds rushing hither and thither through the sky.

"As I went up the hill at Canteleu, I looked out over the broad valley of the Seine, which was cut by the snake-like river as far as the eye could see. To the right, Rouen's towers stood out against the sky, and to the left the view stopped at the distant, forest-covered hills. Then I crossed the forest of Roumare and, toward five o'clock, reached the Pavilion, where Cavalier and Céleste were awaiting me.

"For ten years I had appeared there at the same time, in the same manner; and for ten years the same faces had greeted me with the same words.

" 'Welcome, master! We hope your health is good.'

"Cavalier had hardly changed. He withstood time like an old tree; but Céleste, especially in the past four years, had become unrecognizable.

"She was almost bent in two, and, although still active, when she walked her body was almost bent at right angles to her legs.

"The old woman, who was very devoted to me, always seemed touched on seeing me again, and each time, as I left, she would say:

" 'This may be the last time, master.'

"The sad, timid farewell of this old servant, this hopeless resignation to the inevitable fate which was not far off for her, moved me strangely each year.

"I dismounted, and while Cavalier, whom I had greeted, was leading my horse to the little shed which served as a stable, I entered, followed by Céleste, into the kitchen, which also served as dining-room.

"Then the gamekeeper joined us. I saw at first

glance that something was the matter. He seemed preoccupied, ill at ease, worried.

"I said to him:

" 'Well, Cavalier, is everything all right? '

"He muttered:

" 'Yes and no. There are things I don't like.'

"I asked:

" 'What? Tell me about it.'

"But he shook his head.

" 'No, not yet, Monsieur. I do not wish to bother you with my little troubles so soon after your arrival.'

"I insisted, but he absolutely refused to give me any information before dinner. From his expression, I could tell that it was something very serious.

"Not knowing what to say to him, I asked:

" 'How about game? Much of it this year? '

" 'Oh, yes! You'll find all you want. Thank heaven, I had my eyes open.'

"He said that with so much seriousness, with such sad solemnity, that it was really almost funny. His big gray mustache seemed almost ready to drop off from his lips.

"Suddenly I remembered that I had not yet seen his nephew.

" 'Where is Marius? Why does he not show himself? '

"The gamekeeper started, looking me suddenly in the face:

" 'Well, Monsieur, I had rather tell you the whole business right away; it's on account of him that I am feeling badly.'

" 'Ah! Well, where is he? '

" 'Over in the stable, Monsieur. I was waiting for the right time to bring him out.'

" 'What has he done? '

“ ‘ Well, Monsieur——’

“ The gamekeeper, however, hesitated, his voice altered and shaky, his face suddenly furrowed by the deep lines of an old man.

“ He continued slowly:

“ ‘ Well, I found out, last winter, that someone was poaching in the woods of Roseraies, but I couldn’t seem to catch the man. I spent night after night on the lookout for him. In vain. During that time, the poaching began over by Ecorcheville. I was growing thin from vexation. But as for catching the trespasser, impossible! One might have thought that the rascal was forewarned of my plans.

“ ‘ But one day, while I was brushing Marius’ Sunday trousers, I found forty cents in his pocket. Where had he gotten them?

“ ‘ I thought the matter over for about a week, and I noticed that he used to go out; he would leave just as I was returning—yes, Monsieur.

“ ‘ Then I started to watch him, without the slightest idea of what the truth might be. One morning, just as I was going to bed before him, I got right up again, and followed him. For shadowing a man, there is nobody like me, Monsieur.

“ ‘ And I caught him, Marius, poaching on your lands, Monsieur; he my nephew, I your keeper!

“ ‘ The blood rushed to my head, and I almost killed him on the spot, I hit him so hard. Oh! yes, I thrashed him all right. And I promised him that he would get another beating from my hand, before you, as an example.

“ ‘ There! I have grown thin from sorrow. You know how it is when one is vexed like that. But tell me, what would you have done? The boy has no father or mother, and I am the last one of his blood; I kept him, I couldn’t drive him out, could I?

" ' I told him that if it happened again I would have no more pity for him, all would be over. There! Did I do right, Monsieur? ' "

" I answered, holding out my hand :

" ' You did well, Cavalier; you are an honest man. ' "

" He rose.

" ' Thank you, Monsieur. Now I am going to fetch him. I must give him his thrashing, as an example. ' "

" I knew that it was hopeless to try and turn the old man from his idea. I therefore let him have his own way.

" He got the rascal and brought him back by the ear.

" I was seated on a cane chair, with the solemn expression of a judge.

" Marius seemed to have grown; he was homelier even than the year before, with his evil, sneaking expression.

" His big hands seemed gigantic.

" His uncle pushed him up to me, and, in his soldierly voice, said :

" ' Beg the gentleman's pardon. ' "

" The boy didn't say a word.

" Then seizing him under the arms, the former *gendarme* lifted him right off the ground, and began to spank him with such force that I rose to stop the blows.

" The child was now howling: ' Mercy! mercy! mercy! I promise—— ' "

" Cavalier put him back on the ground and forced him to his knees :

" ' Beg for pardon, ' he said.

" With eyes lowered, the scamp murmured :

" ' Pardon! ' "

" Then his uncle lifted him to his feet, and dismissed him with a slap which almost knocked him down again.

" He escaped, and I did not see him again that evening.

" Cavalier appeared overwhelmed.

" ' He is a bad egg,' he said.

" And throughout the whole dinner, he kept repeating:

" ' Oh! that makes me feel badly, Monsieur, that makes me feel badly.'

" I tried to comfort him, but in vain.

" I went to bed early, so that I might start out at daybreak.

" My dog was already asleep on the floor, at the foot of my bed, when I put out the light.

" I was awakened toward the middle of the night by the furious barking of my dog Bock. I immediately noticed that my room was full of smoke. I jumped out of bed, made a light, ran to the door and opened it. A cloud of flames burst in. The house was on fire.

" I quickly closed the door, barricaded it with a heavy oak beam, and, drawing on some clothes, I first lowered my dog through the window, by means of a rope made of my sheets; then, having thrown out the rest of my clothes, my game-bag and my gun, I in turn escaped the same way.

" I began to shout with all my might: ' Cavalier! Cavalier! Cavalier! '

" But the gamekeeper did not wake up. He had the sound sleep of an old *gendarme*.

" However, I could see through the lower windows that the whole ground-floor was nothing but a roaring furnace; I also noticed that it had been filled with straw in order to help the fire.

"Somebody must purposely have set fire to the place!

"I continued shrieking wildly: 'Cavalier!'

"Then the thought struck me that the smoke might be suffocating him. I got an idea, and slipping two cartridges into my gun, I shot straight for his window.

"The six panes of glass shattered into the room in a cloud of glass. This time the old man had heard me, and he appeared, dazed, in his night-shirt, bewildered by the glare which illumined the whole front of his house.

"I cried to him:

"'Your house is on fire! Escape through the window! Quick! Quick!'

"The flames were coming out through all the cracks down-stairs, were licking along the wall, were creeping toward him and going to surround him. He jumped and landed on his feet, like a cat.

"It was none too early. The thatch roof cracked in the middle, right over the staircase, which formed a kind of flue for the fire downstairs; and an immense red jet jumped up into the air, spreading like a stream of water and sprinkling a shower of sparks around the hut. In a few seconds it was nothing but a pool of flames.

"Cavalier, thunderstruck, asked:

"'How did the fire start?'

"I answered:

"'Somebody lit it in the kitchen.'

"He muttered:

"'Who could have started the fire?'

"And I, suddenly guessing, answered:

"'Marius!'

"The old man understood. He stammered:

"'Good God! That is why he didn't return.'

"A terrible thought flashed through my mind. I cried:

" 'And Céleste! Céleste!'

"He did not answer. The house caved in before us, forming only an enormous, bright, blinding brazier, an awe-inspiring funeral-pile, where the poor woman could no longer be anything but a glowing ember, a glowing ember of human flesh.

"We had not heard a single cry.

"As the fire crept toward the shed, I suddenly bethought me of my horse, and Cavalier ran to free it.

"Hardly had he opened the door of the stable, when a nimble and rapid body slipped between his legs, and threw him on his face. It was Marius, running for all he was worth.

"The man was up in a second. He tried to run after the wretch, but, seeing that he could not catch him, and maddened by an irresistible anger, yielding to one of those thoughtless impulses which we cannot foresee or prevent, he picked up my gun, which was lying on the ground near him, threw it to his shoulder, and, before I could make a motion, he pulled the trigger without even noticing whether or not the weapon was loaded.

"One of the cartridges which I had put in to announce the fire had not been discharged, and the charge caught the fugitive right in the back, and threw him on his face, bleeding profusely. He immediately began to claw the earth with his hands and with his knees, as though trying to run on four feet, after the habit of rabbits which have been wounded to death and see the hunter approaching.

"I rushed forward to the child, but I could already hear the death-rattle. He passed away before the fire was extinguished, without having said a word.



“ Cavalier, still in his shirt, his legs bare, was standing near us, motionless, dazed.

“ When the people from the village arrived, my gamekeeper was taken away, like an insane man.

“ I appeared at the trial as witness, and related the facts in detail, without changing a thing. Cavalier was acquitted. He disappeared that very day, leaving the country.

“ I have never seen him since.

“ There, gentlemen, that is my story.”





## LASTING LOVE



It was the end of the dinner that opened the hunt. The Marquis de Bertrans with his guests sat around a brightly lighted table, covered with fruits and flowers. The conversation drifted to love. Immediately there arose an animated discussion, the same eternal discussion as to whether it were possible to love more than once. Examples were given of persons who had loved once; these were offset by those who had loved violently many times. The men agreed that passion, like sickness, may attack the same person several times, unless it strikes to kill. This conclusion seemed quite incontestable. The women, however, who based their opinion on poetry rather than on practical observation, maintained that love, the great passion, may come only once to mortals. It resembles powder, they said, this love. A heart once touched with it becomes forever so void, so ravaged, so consumed, that no other strong sentiment can find rest in it, not even a dream.

The Marquis, who had indulged in many love affairs, disputed this belief.

"I tell you it is possible to love several times with all one's heart and soul. You quote examples

of persons who have killed themselves to prove the impossibility of a second passion. I wager that if they had not foolishly committed suicide and so destroyed the possibility of a second experience they would have found a new love and still another and so on till death. It is with love as with drink. He who has once indulged is forever a slave. It is a thing of temperament."

They chose the old Doctor as arbitrator. He thought it was as the Marquis has said, a thing of temperament.

"As for me," he said, "I once knew of a love which lasted fifty-five years without one day's respite, which ended only with death." The wife of the Marquis clasped her hands.

"That is beautiful! Ah, what a dream to be loved in such a way! What bliss to live for fifty-five years enveloped in an unwavering, penetrating affection! How this happy being must have blessed his life, to be so adored!"

The Doctor smiled.

"You are not mistaken, Madame, on this point—the loved one was a man. You even know him; it is Monsieur Chonquet, the chemist. As to the woman, you knew her also, the old chair-mender, who came every year to the Château." The enthusiasm of the women fell. Some expressed their contempt with "Pouah!" for the love of common people did not interest them. The Doctor continued: "Three months ago I was called to the death-bed of the old chair-mender. The priest had preceded me. She wished to make us the executors of her will. In order that we might understand her conduct, she told us the story of her life. It is most singular and touching. Her father and mother were both chair-menders. She never lived long in any one place. As

a little child she wandered about with them, dirty, unkempt, hungry. They visited many towns, leaving their horse, wagon and dog just outside the limits, where the child played in the grass alone until her parents had repaired all the broken chairs in the place. They seldom spoke, except to cry, 'Chairs! Chairs! Mender of chairs!'

"When the little one strayed too far away, she would be called back by the harsh, angry voice of her father. She never heard a word of affection. When she grew older, she fetched and carried the broken chairs. Then it was she made friends with the little street urchins, but their parents always called them away and scolded them for speaking to the bare-footed mender. Often the boys threw stones at her. Once a kind woman gave her a few pennies. She saved them most carefully.

"One day—she was then eleven years old—as she picked her way through a country town she met, behind the cemetery, the little Chonquet, weeping bitterly, because one of his playmates had stolen two precious pennies. The tears of the small villager, one of those much-envied mortals, who, she imagined, never knew trouble, completely upset her. She approached him and, bowing, asked the cause of his grief, and put into his hands all her savings. He took them without hesitation and dried his eyes. Wild with joy, she kissed him. He was busy counting his money, and did not object. She, seeing that she was not repulsed, began again to kiss him and even gave him a tremendous hug—then she ran away.

"What was going on in her poor little head? Was it because she had sacrificed all of her fortune that she became madly fond of him, or was it because she had given him her first tender kiss? The mystery is alike for children and for those of riper years.

For months she dreamed of that corner near the cemetery and of the little villager. She stole pennies from her parents to give him at their next meeting. When she returned to the spot near the cemetery, he was not there. Passing his father's drug store, she caught sight of him behind the counter. He was sitting between a large red globe and a blue one. She only loved him the more, and, wrought up to an ecstasy by the sight of him surrounded by the brilliant-colored globes, she nearly fainted with emotion. She cherished forever in her heart this beautiful sight. The following year she met him near the school, playing marbles. She threw herself on him, took him in her arms, and kissed him so passionately that he cried aloud. To quiet him, she gave him all her money. Three francs! A real gold mine, at which he gazed with staring eyes.

"After this he allowed her to caress him as much as she wished. During the next four years she put into his hands all her savings, which he pocketed conscientiously in exchange for kisses. At one time it was thirty sous, at another two francs. Again, she only had twelve sous. She wept with grief and shame, explaining brokenly that it had been a poor year. The next time she brought five francs, in one whole piece, which made her laugh with joy. She no longer thought of any one but the boy, and he watched for her with impatience; sometimes he would run to meet her. This made her heart thump with joy. Suddenly he disappeared. He had gone to boarding-school. She found this out by careful investigation. She soon ingratiated herself with his parents and used her diplomacy in order that they might call him home for the holidays. After a year of intrigue she met with success. She had not seen him for two years, and scarcely recognized him, he

was so changed, tall, beautiful and dignified in his uniform, with its brass buttons. He pretended not to know her, and passed by without a glance. She wept for two days and since then loved and suffered until the end.

“ Every year he returned and she passed him, not daring to lift her eyes. He never condescended to turn his head toward her. She loved him madly, hopelessly. She said to me:

“ ‘ He is the only man whom I have ever seen. I don’t even know if another exists.’ Her parents died. She continued their work.

“ One day, on entering the village, where her heart always remained, she saw Chonquet coming out of his pharmacy with a young lady leaning on his arm. She was his wife. That night the chairmender threw herself into the river. A drunkard passing the spot pulled her out and took her to the drug store. Young Chonquet came down in his dressing-gown to revive her. Without seeming to know who she was, he undressed her and rubbed her; then he said, in a harsh voice:

“ ‘ You are mad! People must not do stupid things like that.’ His voice brought her to life again, and she was happy for a long time. He refused remuneration for his trouble, although she insisted.

“ All her life passed in this way. She worked, thinking always of him. She began to buy medicines at his pharmacy; this gave her a chance to talk to him and to see him closely. In a way, she was still able to give him money.

“ As I said before, she died this spring. When she had closed her pathetic story she entreated me to take her earnings to the man she loved. She had worked only that she might leave him something to remind him of her after death. I gave the priest

fifty francs for her funeral expenses. The next morning I took the rest to Monsieur Chonquet as he was finishing his breakfast. His wife sat at the table, fat and red, important and self-satisfied. They welcomed me and offered me some coffee, which I accepted. Then I began my story in a trembling voice, sure that they would be softened, even to tears. As soon as Chonquet understood that he had been loved by that vagabond! that chair-mender! that wanderer!' he swore with indignation, as though his reputation had been sullied, the respect of decent people lost, his personal honor, something precious and dearer to him than life, gone. His exasperated wife kept repeating: 'That thing! That thing!'

"Seeming unable to find words suitable to the enormity, he stood up and began striding about. He muttered: 'Can you understand anything so horrible, Doctor? Oh, if I had only known it while she was alive, I should have had her thrown into prison. I promise you she would not have escaped.'

"I was dumfounded; I hardly knew what to think or say, but I had to finish my mission. 'She commissioned me,' I said, 'to give you her savings, which amount to three thousand five hundred francs. As what I have just told you seems to be very disagreeable, perhaps you would prefer to give this money to the poor.'

"They looked at me, that man and woman, speechless with amazement. I took the few thousand francs from out of my pocket. Wretched-looking money from every country. Pennies and gold pieces all mixed together. Then I asked:

"'What is your decision?'

"Madame Chonquet spoke to me first. 'Well, since it is the dying woman's wish, it seems to me impossible to refuse it.'

" Her husband said, in a shamefaced manner: ' We could buy something for our children with it.'

" I answered dryly: ' As you wish.'

" He replied: ' Well, give it to us anyhow, since she commissioned you to do so; we will find a way to use it for some good purpose.'

" I gave them the money, bowed and left.

" The next day Chonquet came to me and said brusquely:

" ' That woman left her wagon here—what have you done with it? '

" ' Nothing; take it if you wish.'

" ' It's just what I wanted,' he added, and walked off. I called him back and said:

" ' She also left her old horse and two dogs. Don't you need them? '

" He stared at me surprised: ' Well, no! Really, what would I do with them? '

" ' Dispose of them as you like.'

" He laughed and held out his hand to me. I shook it. What will you? The doctor and the druggist must not be at enmity. I have kept the dogs. The priest took the old horse. The wagon is useful to Chonquet, and with the money he has bought railroad stock. That is the only deep, unfailing example of love that I have ever known in my whole existence."

The Doctor looked up. The Marquise, whose eyes were full of tears, sighed and said:

" There is no denying the fact, only women know how to love."





## INDISCRETION



HEY had loved each other before marriage with a pure and lofty love. They had first met by the seashore. He had found this young girl charming, as she passed by with her light-colored parasol and her dainty dress clearly outlined against the horizon. He had loved her, blond and frail, in this impressive frame of blue ocean and azure sky. He could not distinguish the tenderness which this budding woman awoke in him from the vague and powerful emotion which the fresh salt air and the grand scenery of surf and sunshine and waves stirred up in his soul.

She, on the other hand, had loved him because he courted her, because he was young, rich, kind, and attentive. She had loved him because it is natural for young girls to love men who whisper sweet nothings to them.

So for three months they had lived side by side and hand in hand. The greetings which they exchanged in the morning before the bath, in the freshness of the new-born day, or in the evening on the sand, under the stars, in the warmth of a calm night, whispered low, very low, already had the flavor of kisses, though their lips had never met.

Each dreamed of the other at night, each thought

of the other on awakening, and, without yet having voiced their sentiments, each longed for the other, body and soul.

After marriage their love descended to earth. It was at first a tireless, sensuous passion, then exalted tenderness composed of tangible poetry, very proper caresses, and new and foolish inventions. Every glance and gesture was an expression of passion.

But, little by little, without even noticing it, they began to get tired of each other. Love was still strong, but they had nothing more to reveal to each other, nothing more to learn from each other, no new tale of endearment, no unexpected outburst, no new way of expressing the well-known, oft-repeated verb.

They tried, however, to rekindle the dwindling flame of their first love. Every day they tried some new trick or desperate attempt to bring back to their hearts the uncooled ardor of their first days of married life. They tried moonlight walks under the trees, in the sweet warmth of the summer evenings, the poetry of mist-covered beaches, the excitement of public festivals.

One morning Henriette said to Paul:

"Will you take me to a café for dinner?"

"Certainly, dearie."

"To a well-known café?"

"Of course!"

He looked at her with a questioning glance, seeing that she was thinking of something which she did not wish to say.

She went on:

"You know, one of those cafés—oh, how can I explain myself?—in a sporty café!"

He smiled: "Of course, I understand—you mean

in one of the cafés which are commonly called Bohemian."

"Yes, that's it. But take me to one of the big places, one where you are known, one where you have already supped—no—dined—well, you know—I—I—oh! I will never dare say it!"

"Go ahead, dearie. Little secrets should no longer exist between us."

"No, I don't dare."

"Go on; don't be prudish. Tell me."

"Well, I—I—I want to be taken for your sweetheart—there! and I want the boys, who do not know that you are married, to take me for such; and you too—I want you to think that I am your sweetheart for one hour, in that place which must hold so many memories for you. There! And I will play that I am your sweetheart. It's awful, I know—I am abominably ashamed, I am as red as a beet. Don't look at me!"

He laughed, greatly amused, and answered:

"All right, we will go to-night to a very swell place where I am well known."

Toward seven o'clock they went up the stairs of one of the big cafés on the Boulevard, he smiling, with the look of a conqueror, she timid, veiled, delighted. They were immediately shown to one of the luxurious private dining-rooms, furnished with four large arm-chairs and a red plush couch. The head waiter entered and brought them the *menu*. Paul handed it to his wife.

"What do you want to eat?"

"I don't care; order whatever is good."

After placing his coat in the hands of the waiter, he ordered the dinner and called for champagne.

The waiter looked at the young woman and smiled. He took the order and murmured:

"Will Monsieur Paul have his champagne sweet or dry?"

"Dry, very dry."

Henriette was pleased to hear that this man knew her husband's name.

They sat on the couch, side by side, and began to eat.

Ten candles lighted them, and were reflected in the mirrors all around the room, which seemed to increase the brilliancy a thousand-fold.

Henriette drank glass after glass in order to keep up courage, although she already felt dizzy after the first few glasses. Paul, excited by the memories which returned to him, kept kissing his wife's hands. His eyes were sparkling.

She was feeling strangely excited in this new place, restless, pleased, a little ruffled, but full of life. Two waiters, serious, silent, accustomed to seeing and forgetting everything, to moving only when it was necessary and to leaving when they felt that they were superfluous, were silently flitting hither and thither.

Toward the middle of the dinner, Henriette was well under the influence of champagne. She was prattling along fearlessly, her cheeks flushed, her eyes glistening.

"Come on, Paul; tell me everything."

"What, sweetheart?"

"I don't dare tell you."

"Go on!"

"Have you loved many women before me?"

He hesitated, a little perplexed, not knowing

whether he should hide his adventures or boast of them.

She continued:

"Oh! please tell me. How many have you loved?"

"A few."

"How many?"

"I don't know. How do you expect me to know such things?"

"Haven't you counted them?"

"Of course not."

"Then you must have loved a good many!"

"Perhaps."

"About how many? Just tell me about how many."

"But I don't know, dearest. Some years a good many, and some years only a few."

"How many a year, did you say?"

"Sometimes twenty or thirty, sometimes only four or five."

"Oh! that makes more than a hundred in all!"

"Yes, just about."

"Oh! I think that is dreadful!"

"Why dreadful?"

"Because it's dreadful when you think of it—all those women—and always—always the same thing. Oh! it's dreadful, just the same—more than a hundred women!"

He was surprised that she should think that dreadful, and answered, with the air of superiority which men take with women when they wish to make them understand that they have said something foolish:

"That's funny! If it is dreadful to have a hundred women, it's dreadful to have one."

"Oh, no, not at all!"

"Why not?"

"Because with one woman you have a real bond of love which attaches you to her, while with a hundred women it's not the same at all. There is no real love. I don't understand how a man can associate with such women."

"But they are all right."

"No, they can't be!"

"Yes, they are!"

"Oh, stop; you disgust me!"

"But then, why did you ask me how many sweet-hearts I had had?"

"Because——"

"That's no reason!"

"What were they — actresses, little shop-girls, or society women?"

"A few of each."

"It must have been rather monotonous toward the last."

"Oh, no; it's amusing to change."

She remained thoughtful, staring at her champagne glass. It was full—she drank it in one gulp; then putting it back on the table, she threw her arms around her husband's neck and murmured in his ear:

"Oh! how I love you, sweetheart! how I love you!"

He threw his arms around her in a passionate



embrace. A waiter, who was just entering, backed out, closing the door. Service was interrupted for about five minutes.

When the head waiter came back, solemn and dignified, bringing fruits and dessert, she was once more holding between her fingers a full glass, and staring down through the amber liquid as though seeing unknown things. She murmured in a dreamy voice:

“ Yes, it must be fun! ”





## THE BARONESS



COME with me," said my friend Boisrené, "you will see some very interesting bric-à-brac and works of art there."

He conducted me to the first floor of an elegant house in one of the big streets of Paris. We were welcomed by a very pleasing man, with excellent manners, who led us from room to room, showing us rare things, the price of which he mentioned carelessly. Large sums, ten, twenty, thirty, fifty thousand francs, dropped from his lips with such grace and ease that one could not doubt that this gentleman-merchant had millions shut up in his safe.

I had known him by reputation for a long time. Very bright, clever, intelligent, he acted as intermediary for all sorts of transactions. He kept in touch with all the richest amateurs in Paris, and even of Europe and America, knowing their tastes and preferences; he apprised them by letter, or by wire if they lived in a distant city, as soon as he knew of some work of art which might suit them.

Men of the best society had had recourse to him



in hours of difficulty, either to find money for gambling or to pay off a debt, or to sell a picture, a family jewel, or a tapestry.

It was said that he never refused his services when he saw a chance of gain.

Boisrené seemed very intimate with this strange merchant. They must have worked together in many a deal. I observed the man with great interest.

He was tall, thin, bald, and very elegant. His soft, insinuating voice had a peculiar, tempting charm which seemed to give to the objects a special value. When he held anything in his hands, he turned it round and round, looking at it with such skill, refinement, and sympathy that the object seemed immediately to be beautified and transformed by his look and touch. And the value increased in one's estimation, after the object had passed from the show-case through his hands.

"And your Christ," said Boisrené, "that beautiful Renaissance Christ which you showed me last year?"

The man smiled and answered:

"It has been sold, and in a very peculiar manner. There is a real Parisian story for you! Would you like to hear it?"

"With pleasure."

"Do you know the Baroness Samoris?"

"Yes and no. I have seen her once, but I know what she is!"

"You know—everything?"

"Yes."

"Would you mind telling me, so that I can see that you are not mistaken?"

"Certainly. Madame Samoris is a woman of the world who has a daughter, without anyone having known her husband. At any rate, if she has had no

husband her lovers have been very discreet, for she is received in a certain tolerant or blind society. She goes to church and devoutly partakes of communion, so that everyone may know it, and that she may not be compromised. She expects her daughter to marry well. Is that correct? ”

“ Yes, but I will complete your information. She is a woman who is more respected by her lovers than if she had none. That is a rare quality, for in this manner she can get what she wishes from a man. The man whom she has chosen, without knowing it himself, has courted her for a long time, has desired her modestly, obtains her with astonishment and possesses her with consideration. He does not notice that he is paying, she is so tactful; and she maintains her relations on such a footing of reserve and dignity that he would slap the first man who dared doubt the virtue of his sweetheart. And all this in the best of faith.

“ Several times I have been able to render little services to this woman. She has no secrets for me.

“ Toward the beginning of January she came to me in order to borrow thirty thousand francs. Naturally, I did not lend them to her; but, as I wished to oblige her, I told her to explain her situation to me completely, so that I might see whether there was not something I could do for her.

“ She told me her troubles in such cautious language that she could not have spoken more delicately of her child's first communion. I finally managed to understand that times were hard, and that she was penniless.

“ The commercial crisis, political unrest, rumors of war, had made money scarce even in the hands of lovers. And then, of course, she could not take the first man who came along.

"She had to have a man in the best of society, who could strengthen her reputation as well as help her financially. A reveler, no matter how rich, would have compromised her forever and would have made the marriage of her daughter quite a problem.

"She had to support her household and continue to receive lavishly, in order not to lose the opportunity of finding, among her numerous visitors, the discreet and distinguished friend for whom she was waiting, and whom she would choose.

"I showed her that my thirty thousand francs would have but little likelihood of returning to me; for, after eating them up, she would have to find at least sixty thousand more, in a lump, to pay me back.

"She seemed extremely sorry when she heard this. I did not know just what to do, when an idea, a really brilliant idea, struck me.

"I had just bought this Renaissance Christ which I showed you, an admirable piece of workmanship, one of the finest of its kind that I have ever seen.

" 'My dear friend,' I said to her, 'I am going to bring this ivory to you. You will invent some ingenious, touching, poetic story, anything that you wish, to explain your desire for parting with it. It is, of course, a family heirloom left you by your father.

" 'I myself will send you amateurs, or will bring them to you. The rest concerns you. Before they come I will drop you a line about their situation, both social and financial. This Christ is worth fifty thousand francs; but I will let it go for thirty thousand. The difference will be for you.'

"She considered the matter seriously for several minutes, and then answered: 'Yes, it is perhaps a good idea. I thank you very much.'

"The next day I sent her my Christ, and the same evening the Baron de Saint-Hospital.

"For three months I sent her my best clients, those most solid in business. But I heard nothing more from her.

"One day I received a visit of a foreigner who spoke very little French. I decided to introduce him personally to the Baroness, in order to see how she was getting along.

"A footman in black livery received us and ushered us into a quiet little parlor, furnished with taste, where we waited for several minutes. She appeared, charming as usual, extended her hand to me and invited us to be seated; and when I had explained the reason for my visit, she rang.

"The footman appeared.

"See if Mademoiselle Isabelle can let us enter her chapel.' The young girl herself appeared. She was about fifteen years of age, modest and good to look upon in the sweet freshness of her youth. She wished to conduct us herself to her chapel.

"It was a kind of religious boudoir where a silver lamp was burning before the Christ, my Christ, lying on a black velvet bed. The setting was charming and very clever. The child crossed herself and then said:

"Look, gentlemen. Isn't it beautiful?"

"I took the object, examined it, and declared it to be remarkable. The foreigner also examined it, but he seemed much more occupied by the two women than by the Christ.

"A delicate odor of incense, flowers and perfume pervaded the whole house. One felt at home there. This really was a comfortable home, where one would like to linger.

"When we had returned to the parlor I deli-

cately broached the matter of price. Madame Samoris, lowering her eyes, asked for fifty thousand francs.

“Then she added: ‘If you wish to see it again, Monsieur, I very seldom go out before three o’clock; and I can be found at home every day.’

“In the street the stranger asked me details about the Baroness, whom he had found charming. But I did not hear anything more from either of them.

“Three months passed by.

“One morning, hardly two weeks ago, she came here at about lunch time, and, placing a roll of bills in my hand, said: ‘My dear, you are an angel! Here are fifty thousand francs; I buy your Christ, and I pay twenty thousand francs more for it than the price agreed upon, on condition that you always—always send me clients—for it is still for sale.’”



## FOR SALE



**W**HAT a pleasure it is to go for a walk just as the sun is rising, to drift along through the dewy fields, along by the sea-shore! What bliss! - The sweet light kissing your eyes, the delicately perfumed air entering your nostrils and bathing your whole body in a gentle breeze!

Why do we retain such a sweet remembrance of certain precious minutes spent in communing with Mother Earth—the recollection of receiving a sweet sensation as of a delicate caress imprinted on one's memory at the sight of a picturesque bit of scenery, as though one had been permitted to catch a glimpse of some lovely nymph?

I remember one day when I was tramping along the Brittany coast, toward Cape Finisterre. I was wandering along aimlessly near Quimperlé, in the most picturesque part of

beautiful Brittany. It was one of those spring mornings which make one younger by twenty years, which give one the hopes and dreams of youth.

I was following a path along the sea, by the wheat fields. The fields were still, and the water was as quiet as a mill-pond. The sweet odor of the sea and of ripening crops was everywhere. I was following my fancy along the coast, in a journey which had begun two weeks before. I felt strong, nimble, happy and free from care.

My thoughts were nowhere! Why should one think in those hours of unconscious joy, of the joy as of an animal running around in the grass, or flying through the blue skies? In the distance I could hear the sound of singing voices. As it was Sunday, I thought it might perhaps be a religious procession, but as I turned a sharp bend in the path I stood motionless, spellbound. Five large fishing-smacks appeared before me filled with men, women and children, who were going to high mass at Plouneven. They were drifting along the coast, gently propelled by a soft breeze which just filled the sails. Those heavy vessels were gliding along gently, loaded with passengers; and all those people were chanting. The deep voices of the men, standing by the rails, their heads covered by their quaint hats, mingled with the shriller voices of the women and the high, flute-like notes of the children. The passengers of the five boats were chanting the same hymn, whose monotonous rhythm traveled clearly through the calm air. The five boats were sailing one behind the other, very close together. They passed in front of me, close to me, and as they disappeared I heard the singing grow fainter and fainter.

I began to dream the dreams of youth, in a childish yet charming manner. How quickly this age of

dreams disappears, the happiest time of our life! We are never lonely or sad, never morose or disappointed, when within we feel the divine gift of being able to lose ourselves in fond hopes as soon as alone. What a fairyland is the land where everything can happen in the flights of fancy! How beautiful, life under the tinsel of dreams!

Alas! all that is over now!

I began to dream. What of? Of everything which one is expecting, of everything for which one is hoping, of fortune, of glory, of woman.

I was walking along quickly, running my hand through the golden wheat-stalks which bent under my fingers and tickled my skin. As I turned to investigate a little headland, I noticed, at the bottom of a narrow crescent-shaped beach, a white house, built on three terraces which descended to the sand.

Why did the sight of this house make me start with joy? How should I know? Sometimes in wandering around in this manner we see little nooks which we seem to have known for years, they look so familiar and pleasing to the sight. May we not have lived there in years gone by? Everything is alluring, tempting, the faint line of the horizon, the massive trees, the golden sand.

How pretty the house looked on its high terraces, on which great fruit-trees were growing which went down to the water like a giants' stairway!

I stopped, in love with the little house, overwhelmed with a desire to gain possession of it and live there forever!

Going up to the door, my pulse quickened as I noticed on the gate-post a large sign "For Sale."

I felt a thrill of pleasure, as though this house had been offered to me, given to me. Why? I know not.



"For Sale." Then it no longer belonged to anyone; it could belong to anybody, to me, to me! Why this unaccountable sensation of deep joy? I knew that I was not going to buy it! How could I have paid for it? But it was for sale! The bird in the cage belongs to his master, the bird in the air belongs to me, being the property of no one else.

I went into the garden. What an alluring garden, with its fruit trees and fruit walls, its flower beds, and the two old fig trees at the edge of each terrace! When I had reached the last one, I turned around and looked over the sea. The little beach stretched at my feet, curved and sandy; it was cut off from the open by a natural jetty, which closed the entrance to it, and acted as a breakwater as the waves rolled in from the sea on a stormy day.

On the opposing neck of land two enormous stones, one standing, the other lying in the grass, a *menhir* and a *dolmen*, seemed to stand watch over the little house which they had seen built. For centuries they had known this little bay, once deserted; they would still be there when the little house crumbled and disappeared.

Oh, emblems of times gone by, how I do love you!

I rang the bell as though I had been at home. A kindly-looking little old woman, with a white cap on and clad in a black dress, opened the door for me. It seemed as though I had always known her.

I said: "You are not from Brittany yourself, are you?"

She answered: "No, sir, I am from Lorraine." Then she added: "Do you come to visit the house?"

"That's what I should like to do."

I entered. I seemed to recognize everything—the walls, the furniture. I was even surprised not to see my canes standing near the door. I went into the

parlor, a pretty little room covered with straw matting, and with three large windows looking out over the sea. On the mantelpiece stood a couple of vases and a large photograph of a woman. I immediately went toward it, persuaded that I should recognize that also. And I did, although I was certain that I had never met her. It was she, the one for whom I had waited, whom I desired, for whom I called, whose face haunted my dreams. It was she, the one for whom we are always searching everywhere, the one whom we expect to see in the street, or on the country road as soon as we see a red parasol amid the wheat-fields, the one whom we expect to find in the hotel which we enter on a journey, or on the train which we are about to take, or in the parlor when the door opens before us.

It was she, undoubtedly she! I recognized her eyes, which were looking into mine, her soft wavy hair, and her mouth especially, with its sweet smile, of which I had so often dreamed.

I immediately asked: "Who is this woman?"

The old lady answered dryly: "It is Madame."

"Your mistress?" I asked.

She answered in her quiet manner: "Oh, no, sir."

Taking a chair, I sat down and said: "Tell me about it."

She stood motionless, surprised, silent.

I insisted: "Is she the owner of the house?"

"Oh, no, sir."

"Well, to whom *does* the house belong?"

"To my master, Monsieur Tournelle."

Pointing to the photograph, I asked:

"Who is that woman?"

"That is Madame."

"Monsieur's wife?"

" Oh, no, sir."

" His mistress, then? "

Getting no answer, I asked, torn by a queer kind of jealousy, of confused anger against the man who had found this woman:

" Where are they now? "

She murmured: " Monsieur is in Paris, but as for Madame—I don't know where *she* is."

I started: " Then they are no longer together."

" No, sir."

I was sly, and in a solemn voice I said: " Tell me what has happened; I may perhaps be able to be of some service to your master. I know that woman; she is a bad lot! "

The old servant looked at me, and encouraged by my open and frank appearance, she confided in me:

" Oh! she made my master so unhappy. He met her in Italy and brought her back with him. She was a beautiful singer. It was pitiful to see the way Monsieur loved her. They were traveling around this neighborhood last year, when they saw this house, which had been built by a crazy man who wanted to be at least two leagues away from the village. Madame wanted to buy it immediately and stay in it with my master. He bought the house to please her. They lived here all last summer and most of the winter. One morning, just before breakfast, Monsieur called me: ' Césarine, has Madame returned? '

" " No, sir."

" We waited for her all day. He was raving. We searched for her everywhere, but she was not to be found. She had disappeared, no one knows where or how."

Oh, what joy filled me! I could have kissed the

old woman. I felt like taking her in my arms and dancing around the parlor.

So she had gone, she had fled, she had left, tired and disgusted with this man! How happy I felt!

The old lady continued: "Monsieur became despondent, and he went back to Paris, leaving me here with my husband, to sell the house. The price is twenty thousand francs."

But I was no longer listening! I was thinking of her! And suddenly it seemed as though I need only start out again in order to find her. She must have come back in the neighborhood, this spring, to see the house, her dear little house, which she would have loved so dearly without him.

I dropped ten francs in the old servant's hand, seized the photograph, and ran away fondly kissing the dear image. I reached the road and started to walk with my eyes fixed on *her*. What luck that she should be free, that she should have left him! I would surely meet her to-day or to-morrow, this week or the next, since she had left him! She had left him because *my* time had come! She was somewhere in this world! I needed only to find her, since I already knew her.

And once more running my hands through the nodding heads of ripe wheat, I drank in the sea air and felt the sun kiss my cheeks. I went on and on, bewildered with joy, intoxicated with hope. I went on, sure that I would soon meet her and bring her back once more to live in the pretty little house "*For Sale.*" How happy she would be this time!



## THE DIARY OF A MADMAN



He was dead—the head of a high tribunal, the upright magistrate, whose irreproachable life was a proverb in all the courts of France. Advocates, young counselors, judges had saluted at sight of his large, thin, pale face lighted up by two sparkling deep-set eyes, bowing low in token of respect.

He had passed his life in pursuing crime and in protecting the weak. Swindlers and murderers had no more redoubtable enemy, for he seemed to read the most secret thoughts of their minds.

He was dead, now, at the age of eighty-two, honored by the homage and followed by the regrets of a whole people. Soldiers in red trousers had escorted him to the tomb, and men in white cravats had spoken words and shed tears that seemed to be sincere beside his grave.

But here is the strange paper found by the dismayed notary in the desk where he had kept the records of great criminals! It was entitled:

### WHY?

*20th June, 1851.* I have just left court. I have condemned Blondel to death! Now, why did this man kill his five children? Frequently one meets with people to whom the destruction of life is a pleasure. Yes, yes, it should be a pleasure, the great-

est of all, perhaps, for is not killing the next thing to creating? To make and to destroy! These two words contain the history of the universe, all the history of worlds, all that is, all! Why is it not intoxicating to kill?

*25th June.* To think that a being is there who lives, who walks, who runs. A being? What is a being? That animated thing, that bears in it the principle of motion, and a will ruling that motion. It is attached to nothing, this thing. Its feet do not belong to the ground. It is a grain of life that moves on the earth, and this grain of life, coming I know not whence, one can destroy at one's will. Then nothing—nothing more. It perishes, it is finished.

*26th June.* Why, then, is it a crime to kill? Yes, why? On the contrary, it is the law of nature. The mission of every being is to kill; he kills to live, and he lives to kill. The beast kills without ceasing, all day, every instant of his existence. Man kills without ceasing, to nourish himself; but since he needs besides to kill for pleasure, he has invented hunting! The child kills the insects he finds, the little birds, all the little animals that come in his way. But this does not suffice for the irresistible need to massacre that is in us. It is not enough to kill beasts; we must kill man too. Long ago this need was satisfied by human sacrifices. Now, the necessity of social life has made murder a crime. We condemn and punish the assassin! But, as we cannot live without yielding to this natural and imperious instinct of death, we relieve ourselves, from time to time, by wars. Then a whole nation slaughters another nation. It is a feast of blood, a feast that maddens armies, and that intoxicates civilians, women and children, who read, by lamplight at night, the feverish story of massacre.

One might suppose that those destined to accomplish these butcheries of men should be despised! No, they are loaded with honors. They are clad in gold and in resplendent garments; they wear plumes on their heads and ornaments on their breasts; and they are given crosses, rewards, titles of every kind. They are proud, respected, loved by women, cheered by the crowd, solely because their mission is to shed human blood! They drag through the streets their instruments of death, that the passer-by, clad in black, looks on with envy. For to kill is the great law set by nature in the heart of existence! There is nothing more beautiful and honorable than killing!

*30th June.* To kill is the law, because nature loves eternal youth. She seems to cry in all her unconscious acts: "Quick! quick! quick!" The more she destroys, the more she renews herself.

*2d July.* A human being—what is a human being? Through thought it is a reflection of all that is; through memory and science it is an abridged edition of the universe whose history it represents; a mirror of things and of actions, each human being becomes a microcosm in the macrocosm.

*3d July.* It must be a pleasure, unique and full of zest, to kill; to have there before one, the living, thinking being; to make therein a little hole, nothing but a little hole, to see that red thing flow which is the blood, which makes life; and to have before one only a heap of limp flesh, cold, inert, void of thought!

*5th August.* I, who have passed my life in judging, condemning, killing by the spoken word, killing by the guillotine those who had killed by the knife, I, I, if I should do as all the assassins have done, whom I have smitten, I, I—who would know it?

*10th August.* Who would ever know? Who would ever suspect me, me, me, especially if I should

choose a being I had no interest in doing away with?

*15th August.* The temptation has come to me. It pervades my whole being; my hands tremble with the desire to kill.

*22d August.* I could resist no longer. I killed a little creature as an experiment, for a beginning. Jean, my servant, had a goldfinch in a cage hung in the office window. I sent him on an errand, and I took the little bird in my hand, in my hand where I felt its heart beat. It was warm. I went up to my room. From time to time I squeezed it tighter; its heart beat faster; this was atrocious and delicious. I was near choking it. But I could not see the blood.

Then I took scissors, short nail scissors, and I cut its throat with three slits, quite gently. It opened its bill, it struggled to escape me, but I held it, oh! I held it—I could have held a mad dog—and I saw the blood trickle.

And then I did as assassins do—real ones. I washed the scissors, I washed my hands. I sprinkled water, and took the body, the corpse, to the garden to hide it. I buried it under a strawberry-plant. It will never be found. Every day I shall eat a strawberry from that plant. How one can enjoy life, when one knows how!

My servant cried; he thought his bird flown. How could he suspect me? Ah! ah!

*25th August.* I must kill a man! I must!

*30th August.* It is done. But what a little thing! I had gone for a walk in the forest of Vernes. I was thinking of nothing, literally nothing. A child was in the road, a little child eating a slice of bread and butter.

He stops to see me pass and says, “Good-day, Monsieur President.”

And the thought enters my head: “Shall I kill him?”



I answer: "You are alone, my boy?"

"Yes, sir."

"All alone in the wood?"

"Yes, sir."

The wish to kill him intoxicated me like wine. I approached him quite softly, persuaded that he was going to run away. And, suddenly, I seized him by the throat. He looked at me with terror in his eyes—such eyes! He held my wrists in his little hands, and his body writhed like a feather over the fire. Then he moved no more. I threw the body in the ditch, and some weeds on top of it. I returned home, and dined well. What a little thing it was! In the evening, I was very gay, light, rejuvenated; I passed the evening at the Prefect's. They found me witty. But I have not seen blood! I am tranquil.

*31st August.* The body has been discovered. They are hunting for the assassin. Ah! ah!

*1st September.* Two tramps have been arrested. Proofs are lacking.

*2d September.* The parents have been to see me. They wept! Ah! ah!

*6th October.* Nothing has been discovered. Some strolling vagabond must have done the deed. Ah! ah! If I had seen the blood flow, it seems to me I should be tranquil now! The desire to kill is in my blood; it is like the passion of youth at twenty.

*20th October.* Yet another. I was walking by the river, after breakfast. And I saw, under a willow, a fisherman asleep. It was noon. A spade was standing in a potato-field near by, as if expressly for me.

I took it. I returned; I raised it like a club, and with one blow of the edge I cleft the fisherman's head. Oh! he bled, this one! Rose-colored blood. It flowed into the water, quite gently. And I went

away with a grave step. If I had been seen! Ah! ah! I should have made an excellent assassin.

*25th October.* The affair of the fisherman makes a great stir. His nephew, who fished with him, is charged with the murder.

*26th October.* The examining magistrate affirms that the nephew is guilty. Everybody in town believes it. Ah! ah!

*27th October.* The nephew makes a very poor witness. He had gone to the village to buy bread and cheese, he declared. He swore that his uncle had been killed in his absence! Who would believe him?

*28th October.* The nephew has all but confessed, they have badgered him so. Ah! ah! Justice!

*15th November.* There are overwhelming proofs against the nephew, who was his uncle's heir. I shall preside at the sessions.

*25th January.* To death! to death! to death! I have had him condemned to death! Ah! ah! The advocate-general spoke like an angel! Ah! ah! Yet another! I shall go to see him executed!

*10th March.* It is done. They guillotined him this morning. He died very well! very well! That gave me pleasure! How fine it is to see a man's head cut off!

Now, I shall wait, I can wait. It would take such a little thing to let myself be caught.

\* \* \* \* \*

The manuscript contained yet other pages, but without relating any new crime.

Alienist physicians to whom the awful story has been submitted declare that there are in the world many undiscovered madmen, as adroit and as much to be feared as this monstrous lunatic.



## ROSE



THE two young women appear to be buried under a blanket of flowers. They are alone in the immense landau, which is filled with flowers like a giant basket. On the front seat are two small hampers of white satin filled with violets, and on the bearskin by which their knees are covered there is a mass of roses, mimosas, daisies, tuberose and orange blossoms, interwoven with silk ribbon; the two frail bodies seem buried under this beautiful perfumed bed, which hides everything but the shoulders and arms and a little of the dainty waists.

The coachman's whip is wound with a garland of anemones, the horses' traces are quilted with carnations, the spokes of the wheels are clothed in mignonette, and where the lanterns ought to be are two enormous round bouquets which look as though they were the eyes of this strange, rolling, flower-bedecked beast.

The landau drives rapidly along the road, through the Rue d'Antibes, preceded, followed, accompanied, by a crowd of other carriages covered with flowers, full of women almost out of sight under an ocean of violets. It is the flower carnival at Cannes.

The carriage reaches the Boulevard de la Foncière, where the battle is waged. All along the immense avenue a double row of flower-bedecked vehicles are going and coming like an endless ribbon. Flowers are thrown from one to the other. They pass through the air like balls, striking fresh faces, bouncing and falling into the dust, where an army of youngsters pick them up.

A thick crowd is standing on the sidewalks, and held in check by the mounted police, who pass brutally along pushing back the curious ones as though to prevent the common people from mingling with the rich.

In the carriages, people call to each other, recognize each other and bombard each other with roses. A chariot full of pretty women, dressed in red as devils, attracts the eyes of all. A gentleman, who looks like the portraits of Henry IV, is throwing an immense bouquet which is held back by an elastic. Fearing the shock, the women hide their eyes and the men lower their heads, but the graceful, rapid and obedient missile describes a curve and returns to its master, who immediately throws it at some new face.

The two young women start emptying their arsenal by the handful, and receive a perfect hail of flowers; then, after an hour of the battle, a little tired, they tell the coachman to drive along the road which follows the seashore.

The sun disappears behind Esterel, outlining the

dark, rugged mountain against the fiery sky. The clear blue sea, as calm as a mill-pond, stretches out as far as the horizon, where it mingles with the sky; and the fleet, anchored in the middle of the bay, looks like a herd of enormous beasts, motionless on the water, apocalyptic animals, armored and hump-backed, their frail masts looking like feathers, and with eyes which light up when evening approaches.

The two young women, resting easily under the heavy robes, look out lazily over the blue expanse of water. At last one of them says:

"How delightful the evenings are! How good everything seems! Don't you think so, Margot?"

Her companion answers:

"Yes, it is good. But nothing is ever quite complete."

"What is missing? I feel perfectly happy. I don't need anything else."

"Yes, you do. You are not thinking of it. Whatever sensation of delight may fill our bodies, we always long for something more—for the heart."

The other asked with a smile:

"A little love?"

"Yes."

They stopped talking, their eyes fastened on the distant horizon, then the one called Margot murmured: "Life without that seems to me unbearable. I need being loved, if only by a dog. But we are all the same, no matter what you may say, Simone."

"Not at all, my dear. I had rather not be loved at all than to be loved by the first comer. Do you think, for instance, that it would be pleasant to be loved by—by——"

She was looking for someone by whom she could be loved, glancing over the whole vast country. Her eyes, after traveling around the horizon, fell on the

two bright buttons which were shining on the back of the coachman's livery, and she continued, laughing—"by my coachman?"

Madame Margot barely smiled, and said in a low tone of voice:

"I assure you that it is very amusing to be loved by a servant. It has happened to me two or three times. They roll their eyes in such a funny manner—it's enough to make you die laughing! Naturally, the more in love they are, the more severe one must be with them, and then, some day, for some reason, you dismiss them, because, otherwise, if anyone should notice it, you would appear so ridiculous."

Madame Simone was listening, her looks lost in the distance, then she declared:

"No, I'm afraid that my footman's heart would not satisfy me. Tell me how you noticed that they loved you."

"I noticed it the same way that I do with other men—when they get stupid."

"The others don't seem stupid to me, when they love me."

"They are idiots, my dear, unable to talk, to answer, to understand anything."

"But how did you feel when you were loved by a servant? Were you—moved—flattered?"

"Moved? no; flattered—yes, a little. One is always flattered to be loved by a man, no matter who he may be."

"Oh, Margot!"

"Yes, indeed, my dear! For instance, I will tell you of a peculiar incident which happened to me. You will see how clear and complex our emotions are, in such cases.

"About four years ago I happened to be without a maid. I had tried five or six, one right after the

other, and I was about ready to give up in despair when I read, in a newspaper, an advertisement of a young girl knowing how to cook, embroider, dress hair, who was looking for a position and who could furnish the best of references. Besides all these accomplishments, she could speak English.

"I wrote to the given address, and the next day the person in question presented herself. She was tall, slender, pale, shy-looking. She had beautiful black eyes and a charming complexion; she pleased me immediately. I asked for her certificates; she gave me one in English, for she came, as she said, from Lady Rymwell's, where she had been for ten years.

"The certificate showed that the young girl had left of her own free will, in order to return to France, and the only thing with which they had had to find fault during her long period of service was a little French coquettishness.

"This prudish English phrase even made me smile a bit, and I immediately engaged this maid.

"She came to me the same day. Her name was Rose.

"At the end of a month I would have been helpless without her. She was a find, a pearl, a phenomenon.

"She could dress my hair with infinite taste; she could trim a hat better than most milliners, and she could even make my dresses.

"I was astonished at her accomplishments. I had never before been waited on in such a manner.

"She dressed me rapidly and with a surprisingly light touch. I never felt her fingers on my skin, and nothing is so disagreeable to me as contact with a servant's hand. I soon developed habits of excessive laziness, it was so pleasant to be dressed from

head to foot, and from chemise to gloves, by this tall, timid girl, always blushing a little, and never saying a word. After my bath she would rub and massage me while I dozed a little on my couch; I almost considered her more of a friend than a servant.

“ One morning the janitor asked, mysteriously, to speak to me. I was surprised, and told him to come in. He was a good, faithful man, an old soldier, one of my husband’s former orderlies.

“ He seemed to be embarrassed by what he had to say to me. At last he managed to mumble:

“ ‘ Madame, the superintendent of police is down-stairs.’

“ I asked quickly:

“ ‘ What does he wish? ’

“ ‘ He wishes to search the house.’

“ Of course the police are useful, but I hate them. I do not think that it is a noble profession. I answered, angered and hurt:

“ ‘ Why this search? For what reason? He shall not come in.’

The janitor continued:

“ ‘ He claims that there is a criminal hidden in the house.’

“ This time I was frightened and I told him to bring the inspector to me, so that I might get some explanation. He was a man with good manners and decorated with the Legion of Honor. He begged my pardon for disturbing me, and then informed me that I had, among my domestics, a convict.

“ I was shocked; and I answered that I could guarantee every servant in the house, and I began to enumerate them.

“ ‘ The janitor, Pierre Courtin, an old soldier.’

“ ‘ It’s not he.’

“ ‘ A stable-boy, son of a farmer whom I know, and a groom whom you have just seen.’



“ ‘It’s not he.’

“ ‘Then, Monsieur, you see that you must be mistaken.’

“ ‘Excuse me, Madame, but I am positive that I am not making a mistake. As the conviction of a notable criminal is at stake, would you be so kind as to call all your people before us.’

“ ‘At first I refused, but I finally gave in, and called everybody, men and women.’

“ ‘The inspector glanced at them and then declared:

“ ‘This isn’t all.’

“ ‘Excuse me, Monsieur, there is no one left but my maid, a young girl whom you could not possibly mistake for a convict.’

“ ‘He asked:

“ ‘May I also see her?’

“ ‘Certainly.’

“ ‘I rang for Rose, who immediately appeared. She had hardly entered the room, when the inspector made a motion, and two men whom I had not seen, hidden behind the door, jumped on her, seized her and tied her hands behind her back.

I cried out in anger and tried to rush forward to defend her. The inspector stopped me:

“ ‘This girl, Madame, is a man whose name is Jean Nicolas Lecapet, condemned to death in 1879 for assaulting a woman and injuring her so that death resulted. His sentence was commuted to imprisonment for life. He escaped four months ago. We have been looking for him ever since.’

“ ‘I was terrified, bewildered. I did not believe the thing at all. The commissioner continued, laughing:

“ ‘I can prove it to you. His right arm is tattooed.’

“ The sleeve was rolled up. It was true. The inspector added, with bad taste:

“ ‘ You can trust us for the other proofs.’

“ And they led my maid away!

“ Well, would you believe me, the thing that moved me most was not anger at having thus been played upon, deceived and made ridiculous, it was not the shame of having thus been dressed and undressed, handled and touched by this man—but a—deep humiliation—a woman’s humiliation. Do you understand? ”

“ I am afraid I don’t.”

“ Just think—this man had been condemned for—for assaulting a woman. Well! I thought—of the one whom he had assaulted—and—and I felt humiliated—there! Do you understand now? ”

Madame Margot did not answer. She was looking straight ahead, her eyes fastened on the two shining buttons of the livery, with that sphinx-like smile which women sometimes have.



## A FAMILY AFFAIR



THE small engine attached to the Neuilly steam-tram whistled as it passed the Porte Maillot to warn all obstacles to get out of its way and puffed like a person out of breath as it sent out its steam, its pistons moving rapidly with a noise as of iron legs running. The train was going along the broad avenue that ends at the Seine. The sultry heat at the close of a July day lay over the whole city, and from the road, although there was not a breath of wind stirring, there arose a white, chalky, suffocating, warm dust, which adhered to the moist skin, filled the eyes, and got into the lungs. People stood in the doorways of their houses, trying to get a breath of air.

The windows of the steam-tram were open and the curtains fluttered in the wind. There were very few passengers inside, because on warm days people preferred the outside or the platforms. They consisted of stout women in peculiar costumes, of those shopkeepers' wives from the suburbs, who made up for the distinguished looks which they did not possess by ill-assumed dignity; of men tired from office-work, with yellow faces, stooped shoulders, and with one shoulder higher than the other, in con-

sequence of their long hours of writing at a desk. Their uneasy and melancholy faces also spoke of domestic troubles, of constant want of money, disappointed hopes; for they all belonged to the army of poor, threadbare devils who vegetate economically in cheap, plastered houses, with a tiny piece of neglected garden on the outskirts of Paris, in the midst of those fields where night soil is deposited.

A short, corpulent man, with a puffy face, dressed all in black, and wearing a decoration in his button-hole, was talking to a tall, thin man, dressed in a dirty, white linen suit, the coat all unbuttoned, with a white Panama hat on his head. The former spoke so slowly and hesitatingly, that it occasionally almost seemed as if he stammered; he was Monsieur Caravan, chief clerk in the Admiralty. The other, who had formerly been surgeon on board a merchant ship, had set up in practice in Courbevoie, where he applied the vague remnants of medical knowledge which he had retained after an adventurous life to the wretched population of that district. His name was Chenet, and strange rumors were current as to his morality.

Monsieur Caravan had always led the normal life of a man in a Government office. For the last thirty years he had invariably gone the same way to his office every morning, and had met the same men going to business at the same time and nearly on the same spot, and he returned home every evening by the same road, and again met the same faces which he had seen growing old. Every morning, after buying his penny paper at the corner of the Faubourg Saint Honoré, he bought two rolls, and then he went into his office, like a culprit who is giving himself up to justice, and got to his desk as quickly as possible, always feeling uneasy, as though he were expecting a

rebuke for some neglect of duty of which he might have been guilty.

Nothing had ever occurred to change the monotonous order of his existence, for no event affected him except the work of his office, perquisites, gratuities, and promotion. He never spoke of anything but of his duties, either at the Admiralty or at home, for he had married the portionless daughter of one of his colleagues. His mind, which was in a state of atrophy from his depressing daily work, had no other thoughts, hopes or dreams than such as related to the office, and there was a constant source of bitterness that spoilt every pleasure that he might have had, and that was the employment of so many naval officials, "tinsmiths," as they were called because of their silver-lace, as first-class clerks; and every evening at dinner he discussed the matter hotly with his wife, who shared his angry feelings, and proved to their own satisfaction that it was in every way unjust to give places in Paris to men who ought properly to have been employed in the navy.

He was old now, and had scarcely noticed how his life was passing, for school had merely been exchanged for the office without any intermediate transition, and the ushers, at whom he had formerly trembled, were replaced by his chiefs, of whom he was terribly afraid. When he had to go into the rooms of these official despots, it made him tremble from head to foot, and that constant fear had given him a very awkward manner in their presence, a humble demeanor, and a kind of nervous stammering.

He knew nothing more about Paris than a blind man might know, who was led to the same spot by his dog every day; and if he read the account of any uncommon events, or scandals, in his penny paper,

they appeared to him like fantastic tales, which some pressman had made up out of his own head, in order to amuse the inferior *employés*. He did not read the political news, which his paper frequently altered, as the cause which subsidized it might require, for he was not fond of innovations, and when he went through the Avenue of the Champs-Élysées every evening, he looked at the surging crowd of pedestrians, and at the stream of carriages, as a traveler might who has lost his way in a strange country.

As he had completed his thirty years of obligatory service that year, on the first of January, he had had the cross of the Legion of Honor bestowed upon him, which, in the semi-military public offices, is a recompense for the miserable slavery—the official phrase is “loyal services”—of unfortunate convicts who are riveted to their desk. That unexpected dignity gave him a high and new idea of his own capacities, and altogether changed him. He immediately left off wearing light trousers and fancy waistcoats, and wore black trousers and long coats, on which his ribbon which was very broad, showed off better. He got shaved every morning, manicured his nails more carefully, changed his linen every two days, from a legitimate sense of what was proper, and out of respect of the national Order, of which he formed a part; and from that day he was another Caravan, scrupulously clean, majestic, and condescending.

At home, he said, “my cross,” at every moment, and he had become so proud of it that he could not bear to see men wearing any other ribbon in their button-holes. He became especially angry on seeing strange orders—“which nobody ought to be allowed to wear in France;” and he bore Chenet a particular grudge, as he met him on a tram-car

every evening, wearing a decoration of one kind or another, white, blue, orange, or green.

The conversation of the two men, from the Arc de Triomphe to Neuilly, was always the same, and on that day they discussed, first of all, various local abuses, which disgusted them both, and the Mayor of Neuilly received his full share of their censure. Then, as invariably happens in the company of a medical man, Caravan began to enlarge on the chapter of illness, as, in that manner, he hoped to obtain a little gratuitous advice, if he was careful not to show his hand. His mother had been causing him no little anxiety for some time; she had frequent and prolonged fainting fits, and, although she was ninety, she would not take care of herself.

Caravan grew quite tender-hearted when he mentioned her great age, and more than once asked Doctor Chenet, emphasizing the word *doctor*—although he was not fully qualified, being only an *officier de santé*—whether he had often met anyone as old as that. And he rubbed his hands with pleasure; not, perhaps, that he cared very much about seeing the good woman last for ever here on earth, but because the long duration of his mother's life was, as it were, an earnest of old age for himself, and he continued:

“In my family, we last long, and I am sure that, unless I meet with an accident, I shall not die until I am very old.”

The doctor looked at him with pity, and glanced for a moment at his neighbor's red face, his short, thick neck, his “corporation,” as Chenet called it to himself, his two fat, flabby legs, and the apoplectic rotundity of the old official; and, raising the white Panama hat from his head, he said with a snigger:

“I am not so sure of that, old fellow; your

mother is as tough as nails, but I should say that your life is not a very good one."

This rather upset Caravan, who did not speak again until the tram put them down at their destination, where the two friends got out, and Chenet asked his friend to have a glass of vermouth at the Café du Globe, opposite, which both of them were in the habit of frequenting. The proprietor, who was a friend of theirs, held out to them two fingers, which they shook across the bottles on the counter; and then they joined three of their friends, who were playing dominoes, and who had been there since mid-day. They exchanged cordial greetings, with the usual question:—"Anything new?" And then the three players continued their game, and held out their hands without looking up, when the others wished them "Good-night;" after which, both went home to dinner.

Caravan lived in a small two-story house in Courbevoie, near where the roads meet; the ground floor was occupied by a hair-dresser. Two bedrooms, a dining-room and a kitchen, formed the whole of their apartments, and Madame Caravan spent nearly her whole time in cleaning them up, while her daughter, Marie-Louise, who was twelve, and her son, Philippe-Auguste, were running about with all the little, dirty, mischievous brats of the neighborhood, and playing in the gutter.

Caravan had installed his mother, whose avarice was notorious in the neighborhood, and who was terribly thin, in the room above them. She was always cross, and she never passed a day without quarreling and flying into furious tempers. She would apostrophize the neighbors, who were standing at their own doors, the coster-mongers, the street-sweepers, and the street-boys, in the most violent



language; and the latter, to have their revenge, used to follow her at a distance when she went out, and call out rude things after her.

A little servant from Normandy, who was incredibly giddy and thoughtless, performed the household work, and slept on the second floor in the same room as the old woman, for fear of anything happening to her in the night.

When Caravan got in, his wife, who suffered from a chronic passion for cleaning, was polishing up the mahogany chairs that were scattered about the room, with a piece of flannel. She always wore cotton gloves, and adorned her head with a cap ornamented with many colored ribbons, which was always tilted over one ear; and whenever anyone caught her polishing, sweeping, or washing, she used to say:

"I am not rich; everything is very simple in my house, but cleanliness is my luxury, and that is worth quite as much as any other."

As she was gifted with sound, obstinate, practical common sense, she led her husband in everything. Every evening during dinner, and afterward, when they were in their room, they talked over the business of the office for a long time, and although she was twenty years younger than he was, he confided everything to her as if she took the lead, and followed her advice in every matter.

She had never been pretty, and now she had grown ugly; in addition to that, she was short and thin, while her careless and tasteless way of dressing herself concealed her few small feminine attractions, which might have been brought out if she had possessed any taste in dress. Her skirts were always awry, and she frequently scratched herself, no matter on what part of her person, totally indifferent as to who might see her, and so persistently

that anyone who saw her might think that she was suffering from something like the itch. The only adornments that she allowed herself were silk ribbons, which she had in great profusion, and of various colors mixed together, in the pretentious caps which she wore at home.

As soon as she saw her husband she rose and said, as she kissed his whiskers:

"Did you remember Potin, my dear?"

He fell into a chair, in consternation, for that was the fourth time on which he had forgotten a commission that he had promised to do for her.

"It is a fatality," he said; "it is no good for me to think of it all day long, for I am sure to forget it in the evening."

But as he seemed really so very sorry, she merely said, quietly:

"You will think of it to-morrow, I daresay. Anything new at the office?"

"Yes, a great piece of news; another tinsmith has been appointed second chief clerk." She became very serious, and said:

"So he succeeds Ramon; this was the very post that I wanted you to have. And what about Ramon?"

"He retires on his pension."

She became furious, her cap slid down on her shoulder, and she continued:

"There is nothing more to be done in that shop now. And what is the name of the new commissioner?"

"Bonassot."

She took up the *Naval Year Book*, which she always kept close at hand, and looked him up.

"'Bonassot—Toulon. Born in 1851. Student-Commissioner in 1871. Sub-Commissioner in 1875.'"

Has he been to sea?" she continued. At that question Caravan's looks cleared up, and he laughed until his sides shook.

"As much as Balin—as much as Balin, his chief." And he added an old office joke, and laughed more than ever:

"It would not even do to send them by water to inspect the Point-du-Jour, for they would be sick on the penny steamboats on the Seine."

But she remained as serious as if she had not heard him, and then she said in a low voice, as she scratched her chin:

"If we only had a deputy to fall back upon. When the Chamber hears everything that is going on at the Admiralty, the Minister will be turned out . . ."

She was interrupted by a terrible noise on the stairs. Marie-Louise and Philippe-Auguste, who had just come in from the gutter, were slapping each other all the way upstairs. Their mother rushed at them furiously, and taking each of them by an arm, she dragged them into the room, shaking them vigorously; but as soon as they saw their father, they rushed up to him, and he kissed them affectionately, and taking one of them on each knee, began to talk to them.

Philippe-Auguste was an ugly, ill-kempt little brat, dirty from head to foot, with the face of an idiot, and Marie-Louise was already like her mother—spoke like her, repeated her words, and even imitated her movements. She also asked him whether there was anything fresh at the office, and he replied merrily:

"Your friend, Ramon, who comes and dines here every Sunday, is going to leave us, little one. There is a new second head-clerk."

She looked at her father, and with a precocious child's pity, she said:

"Another man has been put over your head again!"

He stopped laughing, and did not reply, and in order to create a diversion, he said, addressing his wife, who was cleaning the windows:

"How is mamma, upstairs?"

Madame Caravan left off rubbing, turned round, pulled her cap up, as it had fallen quite on to her back, and said, with trembling lips:

"Ah! yes; let us talk about your mother, for she has made a pretty scene. Just imagine: a short time ago Madame Lebaudin, the hairdresser's wife, came upstairs to borrow a packet of starch of me, and, as I was not at home, your mother chased her out as though she were a beggar; but I gave it to the old woman. She pretended not to hear, as she always does when one tells her unpleasant truths, but she is no more deaf than I am, as you know. It is all a sham, and the proof of it is that she went up to her own room immediately, without saying a word."

Caravan, embarrassed, did not utter a word, and at that moment the little servant came in to announce dinner. In order to let his mother know, he took a broom-handle, which always stood in a corner, and rapped loudly on the ceiling three times, and then they went into the dining-room. Madame Caravan, junior, helped the soup, and waited for the old woman, but she did not come, and as the soup was getting cold, they began to eat slowly, and when their plates were empty, they waited again, and Madame Caravan, who was furious, attacked her husband:

"She does it on purpose, you know that as well as I do. But you always uphold her."

Not knowing which side to take, he sent Marie-

Louise to fetch her grandmother, and he sat motionless, with his eyes cast down, while his wife tapped her glass angrily with her knife. In about a minute, the door flew open suddenly, and the child came in again, out of breath and very pale, and said hurriedly:

“Grandmamma has fallen on the floor.”

Caravan jumped up, threw his table-napkin down, and rushed upstairs, while his wife, who thought it was some trick of her mother-in-law's, followed more slowly, shrugging her shoulders, as if to express her doubt. When they got upstairs, however, they found the old woman lying at full length in the middle of the room, and when they turned her over, they saw that she was insensible and motionless, while her skin looked more wrinkled and yellow than usual, her eyes were closed, her teeth clenched, and her thin body was stiff.

Caravan knelt down by her, and began to moan:

“My poor mother! my poor mother!” he said. But the other Madame Caravan said:

“Bah! She has only fainted again, that is all, and she has done it to prevent us from dining comfortably, you may be sure of that.”

They put her on the bed, undressed her completely, and Caravan, his wife, and the servant began to rub her; but, in spite of their efforts, she did not recover consciousness, so they sent Rosalie, the servant, to fetch Doctor Chenet. He lived a long way off, on the quay going towards Suresnes, and so it was a considerable time before he arrived. He came at last, however, and, after having looked at the old woman, felt her pulse, and listened for a heart-beat, he said:—“It is all over.”

Caravan threw himself on the body, sobbing

violently; he kissed his mother's rigid face, and wept so, that great tears fell on the dead woman's face, like drops of water, and, naturally, Madame Caravan, junior, showed a decorous amount of grief, and uttered feeble moans, as she stood behind her husband, while she rubbed her eyes vigorously.

But, suddenly, Caravan raised himself up, with his thin hair in disorder, and, looking very ugly in his grief, said:

"But . . . are you sure, doctor? . . . Are you quite sure? . . ."

The doctor stooped over the body, and, handling it with professional dexterity, as a shopkeeper might do, when showing off his goods, he said:

"See, my dear friend, look at her eye."

He raised the eyelid, and the old woman's eye appeared altogether unaltered, unless, perhaps, the pupil was rather larger, and Caravan felt a severe shock at the sight. Then Monsieur Chenet took her thin arm, forced the fingers open, and said, angrily, as if he had been contradicted:

"Just look at her hand; I never make a mistake, you may be quite sure of that."

Caravan fell on the bed, and almost bellowed, while his wife, still whimpering, did what was necessary.

She brought the night-table, on which she spread a towel and placed four wax candles on it, which she lighted; then she took a sprig of box, which was hanging over the chimney glass, and put it between the four candles, in a plate, which she filled with clean water, as she had no holy water. But, after a moment's rapid reflection, she threw a pinch of salt into the water, no doubt, thinking she was performing some sort of act of consecration by doing that,

and when she had finished, she remained standing motionless, and the doctor, who had been helping her, whispered to her:

“ We must take Caravan away.”

She nodded assent, and, going up to her husband, who was still on his knees, sobbing, she raised him up by one arm, while Chenet took him by the other.

They put him into a chair, and his wife kissed his forehead, and then began to lecture him. Chenet enforced her words, and preached firmness, courage, and resignation—the very things which are always wanting in such overwhelming misfortunes—and then both of them took him by the arms again and led him out.

He was crying like a great child, with convulsive sobs; his arms hanging down, and his legs weak, and he went downstairs without knowing what he was doing, and moving his feet mechanically. They put him into the chair which he always occupied at dinner, in front of his empty soup plate. And there he sat, without moving, his eyes fixed on his glass, and so stupefied with grief that he could not even think.

In a corner, Madame Caravan was talking with the doctor and asking what the necessary formalities were, as she wanted to obtain practical information. At last, Monsieur Chenet, who appeared to be waiting for something, took up his hat and prepared to go, saying that he had not dined yet; whereupon, she exclaimed:

“ What! you have not dined? Why, stay here, doctor; don’t go. You shall have whatever we have, for, of course, you understand that we do not fare sumptuously.” He made excuses and refused, but she persisted, and said:

“ You really must stay; at times like this, people

like to have friends near them, and, besides that, perhaps you will be able to persuade my husband to take some nourishment; he must keep up his strength."

The doctor bowed, and, putting down his hat, he said:

"In that case, I will accept your invitation, Madame."

She gave Rosalie, who seemed to have lost her head, some orders, and then sat down, "to pretend to eat," as she said, "to keep the doctor company."

The soup was brought in again, and Monsieur Chenet took two helpings. Then there came a dish of tripe, which exhaled a smell of onions, and which Madame Caravan made up her mind to taste.

"It is excellent," the doctor said, at which she smiled, and, turning to her husband, she said:

"Do take a little, my poor Alfred, only just to put something into your stomach. Remember that you have got to pass the night watching by her!"

He held out his plate, docilely, just as he would have gone to bed, if he had been told to, obeying her in everything, without resistance and without reflection, and he ate; the doctor helped himself three times, while Madame Caravan, from time to time, fished out a large piece at the end of her fork, and swallowed it with a sort of studied indifference.

When a salad bowl full of macaroni was brought in, the doctor said:

"By Jove! That is what I am very fond of." And this time Madame Caravan helped everybody. She even filled the saucers that were being scraped by the children, who, being left to themselves, had been drinking wine without any water, and were now kicking each other under the table.

Chenet remembered that Rossini, the composer,



had been very fond of that Italian dish, and suddenly he exclaimed:

“ Why! that rhymes, and one could begin some lines like this:

*The Maestro Rossini  
Was fond of macaroni.”*

Nobody listened to him, however. Madame Caravan, who had suddenly grown thoughtful, was thinking of all the probable consequences of the event, while her husband made bread pellets, which he put on the table-cloth, and looked at with a fixed, idiotic stare. As he was devoured by thirst, he was continually raising his glass full of wine to his lips, and the consequence was that his mind, which had been upset by the shock and grief, seemed to become vague, and his ideas danced about as digestion commenced.

The doctor, who, meanwhile, had been drinking away steadily, was getting visibly drunk, and Madame Caravan herself felt the reaction which follows all nervous shocks, and was agitated and excited, and although she had drunk nothing but water, she felt her head rather confused.

Presently, Chenet began to relate stories of deaths, that appeared funny to him. For in that suburb of Paris, that is full of people from the provinces, one finds that indifference toward death which all peasants show, were it even their own father or mother; that want of respect, that unconscious brutality which is so common in the country, and so rare in Paris, and he said:

“ Why, I was sent for last week to the Rue du Puteaux, and when I went, I found the patient dead, and the whole family calmly sitting beside the bed finishing a bottle of aniseed cordial, which had been bought the night before to satisfy the dying man’s fancy.”

But Madame Caravan was not listening; she was continually thinking of the inheritance, and Caravan was incapable of understanding anything further.

Coffee was presently served, and it had been made very strong to give them courage. As every cup was well flavored with cognac, it made all their faces red, and confused their ideas still more. To make matters still worse, Chenet suddenly seized the brandy bottle and poured out "a drop for each of them just to wash their mouths out with," as he termed it, and then, without speaking any more, overcome in spite of themselves, by that feeling of animal comfort which alcohol affords after dinner, they slowly sipped the sweet cognac, which formed a yellowish syrup at the bottom of their cups.

The children had fallen asleep, and Rosalie carried them off to bed. Caravan, mechanically obeying that wish to forget oneself which possesses all unhappy persons, helped himself to brandy again several times, and his dull eyes grew bright. At last the doctor rose to go, and seizing his friend's arm, he said:

"Come with me; a little fresh air will do you good. When one is in trouble, one must not remain in one spot."

The other obeyed mechanically, put on his hat, took his stick, and went out, and both of them walked arm-in-arm towards the Seine, in the starlight night.

The air was warm and sweet, for all the gardens in the neighborhood were full of flowers at that season of the year, and their fragrance, which is scarcely perceptible during the day, seemed to awaken at the approach of night, and mingled with the light breezes which blew upon them in the darkness.

The broad avenue, with its two rows of gas-

lamps, that extended as far as the Arc de Triomphe, was deserted and silent, but there was the distant roar of Paris, which seemed to have a reddish vapor hanging over it. It was a kind of continual rumbling, which was at times answered by the whistle of a train at full speed, in the distance, traveling to the ocean, through the provinces.

The fresh air on the faces of the two men rather overcame them at first, made the doctor lose his equilibrium a little, and increased Caravan's giddiness, from which he had suffered since dinner. He walked as if he were in a dream; his thoughts were paralyzed, although he felt no great grief, for he was in a state of mental torpor that prevented him from suffering, and he even felt a sense of relief which was increased by the mildness of the night.

When they reached the bridge, they turned to the right, and got the fresh breeze from the river, which rolled along, calm and melancholy, bordered by tall poplar trees, while the stars looked as if they were floating on the water and were moving with the current. A slight, white mist that floated over the opposite banks, filled their lungs with a sensation of cold, and Caravan stopped suddenly, for he was struck by that smell from the water, which brought back old memories to his mind. For, in his mind, he suddenly saw his mother again, in Picardy, as he had seen her years before, kneeling in front of their door, and washing the heaps of linen at her side, in the stream that ran through their garden. He almost fancied that he could hear the sound of the wooden paddle with which she beat the linen in the calm silence of the country, and her voice, as she called out to him: "Alfred, bring me some soap." And he smelt that odor of running water, of the mist rising from the wet ground, that marshy smell, which

he should never forget, and which came back to him on this very evening on which his mother died.

He stopped, seized with a feeling of despair. A sudden flash seemed to reveal to him the extent of his calamity, and that breath from the river plunged him into an abyss of hopeless grief. His life seemed cut in half, his youth disappeared, swallowed up by that death. All the former days were over and done with, all the recollections of his youth had been swept away; for the future, there would be nobody to talk to him of what had happened in days gone by, of the people he had known of old, of his own part of the country, and of his past life; that was a part of his existence which existed no longer, and the rest might as well end now.

And then he saw "the mother" as she was when young, wearing well-worn dresses, which he remembered for such a long time that they seemed inseparable from her; he recollected her movements, the different tones of her voice, her habits, her predilections, her fits of anger, the wrinkles on her face, the movements of her thin fingers, and all her well-known attitudes, which she would never have again, and clutching hold of the doctor, he began to moan and weep. His thin legs began to tremble, his whole, stout body was shaken by his sobs, all he could say was:

"My mother, my poor mother, my poor mother! . . ."

But his companion, who was still drunk, and who intended to finish the evening in certain places of bad repute that he frequented secretly, made him sit down on the grass by the riverside, and left him almost immediately, under the pretext that he had to see a patient.

Caravan went on crying for some time, and when

he had got to the end of his tears, when his grief had, so to say, run out, he again felt relief, repose, and sudden tranquillity.

The moon had risen, and bathed the horizon in its soft light.

The tall poplar trees had a silvery sheen on them, and the mist on the plain looked like drifting snow; the river, in which the stars were reflected, and which had a sheen as of mother-of-pearl, was gently rippled by the wind. The air was soft and sweet, and Caravan inhaled it almost greedily, and thought that he could perceive a feeling of freshness, of calm and of superhuman consolation pervading him.

He actually resisted that feeling of comfort and relief, and kept on saying to himself: "My mother, my poor mother!" . . . and tried to make himself cry, from a kind of conscientious feeling; but he could not succeed in doing so any longer and those sad thoughts, which had made him sob so bitterly a short time before, had almost passed away. In a few moments, he rose to go home, and returned slowly, under the influence of that serene night, and with a heart soothed in spite of himself.

When he reached the bridge, he saw that the last tramcar was ready to start, and behind it were the brightly lighted windows of the Café du Globe. He felt a longing to tell somebody of his loss, to excite pity, to make himself interesting. He put on a woe-ful face, pushed open the door, and went up to the counter, where the landlord still was. He had counted on creating a sensation, and had hoped that everybody would get up and come to him with outstretched hands, and say: "Why, what is the matter with you?" But nobody noticed his disconsolate face, so he rested his two elbows on the counter, and, burying his face in his hands, he murmured: "Good heavens! Good heavens!"

The landlord looked at him and said: "Are you ill, Monsieur Caravan?"

"No, my friend," he replied, "but my mother has just died."

"Ah!" the other exclaimed, and as a customer at the other end of the establishment asked for a glass of Bavarian beer, he went to attend to him, leaving Caravan almost stupefied at his want of sympathy.

The three domino players were sitting at the same table which they had occupied before dinner, totally absorbed in their game, and Caravan went up to them, in search of pity, but as none of them appeared to notice him, he made up his mind to speak.

"A great misfortune has happened to me since I was here," he said.

All three slightly raised their heads at the same instant, but keeping their eyes fixed on the pieces which they held in their hands.

"What do you say?"

"My mother has just died;" whereupon one of them said:

"Oh! the devil!" with that false air of sorrow which indifferent people assume. Another, who could not find anything to say, emitted a sort of sympathetic whistle, shaking his head at the same time, and the third turned to the game again, as if he were saying to himself: "Is that all?"

Caravan had expected some of those expressions that are said to "come from the heart," and when he saw how his news was received, he left the table, indignant at their calmness at their friend's sorrow, although this sorrow had stupefied him so that he scarcely felt it any longer. When he got home his wife was waiting for him in her nightgown, and sit-

ting in a low chair by the open window, still thinking of the inheritance.

"Undress yourself," she said; "we can go on talking."

He raised his head, and looking at the ceiling, said:

"But . . . there is nobody upstairs."

"I beg your pardon, Rosalie is with her, and you can go and take her place at three o'clock in the morning, when you have had some sleep."

He only partially undressed, however, so as to be ready for anything that might happen, and after tying a silk handkerchief round his head, he lay down to rest, and for some time neither of them spoke. Madame Caravan was thinking.

Her nightcap was adorned with a red bow, and was pushed rather over one ear, as was the way with all the caps she wore, and presently she turned toward him and said:

"Do you know whether your mother made a will?"

He hesitated for a moment, and then replied:

"I . . . I do not think so. . . . No, I am sure that she did not."

His wife looked at him, and she said, in a low, angry tone:

"I call that infamous; here we have been wearing ourselves out for ten years in looking after her, and have boarded and lodged her! Your sister would not have done so much for her, nor I either, if I had known how I was to be rewarded! Yes, it is a disgrace to her memory! I daresay that you will tell me that she paid us, but one cannot pay one's children in ready money for what they do; that obligation is recognized after death; at any rate, that is how honorable people act. So I have had all my

worry and trouble for nothing! Oh, that is nice! that is very nice!"

Poor Caravan, who was almost distracted, kept on repeating:

"My dear, my dear, please, please be quiet."

She grew calmer by degrees, and, resuming her usual voice and manner, she continued:

"We must let your sister know to-morrow."

He started, and said:

"Of course, we must; I had forgotten all about it; I will send her a telegram the first thing in the morning."

"No," she replied, like a woman who had foreseen everything; "no, do not send it before ten or eleven o'clock, so that we may have time to turn round before she comes. It does not take more than two hours to get here from Charenton, and we can say that you lost your head from grief. If we let her know in the course of the day, that will be soon enough, and will give us time to look round."

Caravan put his hand to his forehead, and, in the same timid voice in which he always spoke of his chief, the very thought of whom made him tremble, he said:

"I must let them know at the office."

"Why?" she replied. "On such occasions like this, it is always excusable to forget. Take my advice, and don't let him know; your chief will not be able to say anything to you, and you will put him in a nice fix."

"Oh! yes, that I shall, and he will be in a terrible rage, too, when he notices my absence. Yes, you are right; it is a capital idea, and when I tell him that my mother is dead, he will be obliged to hold his tongue."

And he rubbed his hands in delight at the joke,



when he thought of his chief's face; while upstairs lay the body of the dead old woman, with the servant asleep beside it.

But Madame Caravan grew thoughtful, as if she were preoccupied by something, which she did not care to mention, and at last she said:

"Your mother had given you her clock, had she not; the girl playing at cup and ball?"

He thought for a moment, and then replied:

"Yes, yes; she said to me (but it was a long time ago, when she first came here): 'I shall leave the clock to you, if you look after me well.'"

Madame Caravan was reassured, and regained her serenity, and said:

"Well, then, you must go and fetch it out of her room, for if we get your sister here she will prevent us from taking it."

He hesitated.

"Do you think so? . . ."

That made her angry.

"I certainly think so; once it is in our possession, she will know nothing at all about where it came from; it belongs to us. It is just the same with the chest of drawers with the marble top that is in her room; she gave it me one day when she was in a good temper. We will bring it down at the same time."

Caravan, however, seemed incredulous, and said:

"But, my dear, it is a great responsibility!"

She turned on him furiously.

"Oh! Indeed! Will you never change? You would let your children die of hunger, rather than make a move. Does not that chest of drawers belong to us, as she gave it to me? And if your sister is not satisfied, let her tell me so, me! I don't care a straw

for your sister. Come, get up, and we will bring down what your mother gave us immediately."

Trembling and vanquished, he got out of bed, and began to put on his trousers, but she stopped him:

"It is not worth while to dress yourself; your underwear is quite enough; I mean to go as I am."

They both left the room in their night clothes, went upstairs quite noiselessly, opened the door and went into the room, where the four lighted tapers and the plate with the sprig of box alone seemed to be watching the old woman in her rigid repose; for Rosalie, who was lying back in the easy chair with her legs stretched out, her hands folded in her lap, and her head on one side, was also quite motionless, and was snoring with her mouth wide open.

Caravan took the clock, which was one of those grotesque objects that were produced so plentifully under the Empire. A girl in gilt bronze was holding a cup and ball, and the ball formed the pendulum.

"Give that to me," his wife said, "and take the marble slab off the chest of drawers."

He put the marble slab on his shoulder with considerable effort, and they left the room. Caravan had to stoop in the doorway, and trembled as he went down-stairs, while his wife walked backward, so as to light him, and held the candlestick in one hand, carrying the clock under the other arm.

When they were in their own room, she heaved a sigh.

"We have got over the worst part of the job," she said; "so now let us go and fetch the other things."

But the bureau drawers were full of the old woman's wearing apparel, which they must manage to hide somewhere, and Madame Caravan soon thought of a plan.

“ Go and get that wooden packing-case in the vestibule; it is hardly worth anything, and we may just as well put it here.”

And when he had brought it upstairs, they began to fill it. One by one, they took out all the collars, cuffs, chemises, caps, all the well-worn things that had belonged to the poor woman lying there behind them, and arranged them methodically in the wooden box, in such a manner as to deceive Madame Braux, the deceased woman's other child, who would be coming the next day.

When they had finished, they first of all carried the bureau drawers down-stairs, and the remaining portion afterward, each of them holding an end, and it was some time before they could make up their minds where it would stand best; but at last they decided upon their own room, opposite the bed, between the two windows, and as soon as it was in its place, Madame Caravan filled it with her own things. The clock was placed on the chimney-piece in the dining-room; they looked to see what the effect was, and were both delighted with it, and agreed that nothing could be better. Then they retired, she blew out the candle, and soon everybody in the house was asleep.

It was broad daylight when Caravan opened his eyes again. His mind was rather confused when he woke up, and he did not clearly remember what had happened, for a few minutes; when he did, he felt a weight at his heart, and jumped out of bed, almost ready to cry again.

He hastened to the room overhead, where Rosalie was still sleeping in the same position as the night before, not having awakened once. He sent her to do her work, put fresh tapers in the place of those that had burnt out, and then he looked at his mother,

revolving in his brain those apparently profound thoughts, those religious and philosophical common-places, which trouble people of mediocre intelligence in the presence of death.

But as his wife was calling him, he went downstairs. She had written out a list of what had to be done during the morning, and he was horrified when he saw the memorandum :

1. Report the death at the Mayor's office.
2. See the doctor who had attended her.
3. Order the coffin.
4. Give notice at the church.
5. Go to the undertaker.
6. Order the notices of her death at the printer's.
7. Go to the lawyer.
8. Telegraph the news to all the family.

Besides all this, there were a number of small commissions; so he took his hat and went out. As the news had spread abroad, Madame Caravan's female friends and neighbors soon began to come in, and begged to be allowed to see the body. There had been a scene between husband and wife at the hair-dresser's on the ground floor, about the matter, while a customer was being shaved. The wife, who was knitting steadily, said: " Well, there is one less, and as great a miser as one ever meets with. I certainly did not care for her; but, nevertheless, I must go and have a look at her."

The husband, while lathering his customer's chin, said: " That is another queer fancy! Nobody but a woman would think of such a thing. It is not enough for them to worry you during life, but they cannot even leave you at peace when you are dead." But his wife, without being in the least disconcerted, replied: " The feeling is stronger than I am, and

I must go. It has been on me since the morning. If I were not to see her, I should think about it all my life; but when I have had a good look at her, I shall be satisfied."

The knight of the razor shrugged his shoulders, and remarked in a low voice to the gentleman whose cheek he was scraping: "I just ask you, what sort of ideas do you think these confounded females have? I should not amuse myself by going to see a corpse!" But his wife had heard him, and replied very quietly: "But it is so, it is so." And then, putting her knitting on the counter, she went upstairs, to the first floor, where she met two other neighbors, who had just come, and who were discussing the event with Madame Caravan, who was giving them the details; and they all went together to the death chamber. The four women went in softly, and, one after the other, sprinkled the bed-clothes with holy water, knelt, and made the sign of the cross while they mumbled a prayer. Then they rose from their knees, and looked for some time at the corpse, with round wide-open eyes and mouths partly open, while the daughter-in-law of the dead woman, with her handkerchief to her face, pretended to be sobbing piteously.

When she turned about to walk away, whom should she perceive standing close to the door but Marie-Louise and Philippe-Auguste, who were curiously taking note of all that was going on. Then forgetting her pretended grief, she threw herself upon them with uplifted hands, crying out in a furious voice, "Will you get out of this, you filthy brats?"

Ten minutes later, going upstairs again with another contingent of neighbors, she prayed, wept profusely, performed all her duties, and found once

more her two children, who had followed her upstairs. She again boxed their ears soundly; but the next time she paid no heed to them, and at each fresh arrival of visitors the two urchins always followed in the wake, kneeling down in a corner, and imitating slavishly everything they saw their mother do.

When the afternoon came, the crowds of inquisitive people began to diminish, and soon there were no more visitors. Madame Caravan, returning to her own apartments, began to make the necessary preparations for the funeral ceremony, and the deceased was left alone.

The window of the room was open. A torrid heat entered along with clouds of dust; the flames of the four candles were flickering beside the immobile corpse; and upon the cloth which covered the face, the closed eyes, the two stretched-out hands, small flies alighted, came, went, and careered up and down incessantly, being the only companions of the old woman for the time being.

Marie-Louise and Philippe-Auguste, however, had now left the house, and were running up and down the street. They were soon surrounded by their playmates, by little girls, especially, who were older and who were much more interested in all the mysteries of life, asking questions as if they were grown people.

"Then your grandmother is dead?"—"Yes, she died yesterday evening."—"What does a dead person look like?"

Then Marie began to explain, telling all about the candles, the sprig of box, and the face of the corpse. It was not long before great curiosity was aroused in the minds of all the children, and they asked to be allowed to go upstairs to look at the departed.

Marie-Louise at once organized a first expedition, consisting of five girls and two boys—the biggest and the most courageous. She made them take off their shoes so that they might not be discovered. The troop filed into the house and mounted the stairs as stealthily as an army of mice.

Once in the chamber, the little girl, imitating her mother, regulated the ceremony. She solemnly walked in advance of her comrades, went down on her knees, made the sign of the cross, moved her lips as in prayer, rose, sprinkled the holy water, and while the children, all crowded together, were approaching—frightened and curious, and eager to look at the face and hands of the deceased—she began suddenly to simulate sobbing, and to bury her eyes in her little handkerchief. Then, becoming instantly consoled, on thinking of the other children who were downstairs waiting at the door, she ran downstairs followed by the rest, returning in a minute with another group, then a third; for all the little ragamuffins of the country-side, even to the little beggars in rags, had congregated in order to participate in this new pleasure; and each time she repeated her mother's grimaces with absolute perfection.

At length, however, she became tired. Some game or other drew the children away from the house, and the old grandmother was left alone, forgotten suddenly by everybody.

The room was growing dark, and upon the dry and rigid features of the corpse, the fitful flames of the candles cast patches of light.

Towards eight o'clock, Caravan went to the chamber of death, closed the windows, and renewed the candles. He was now quite composed on entering the room, accustomed already to regard the corpse as though it had been there for months. He

even went the length of declaring that, as yet, there were no signs of decomposition, making this remark just at the moment when he and his wife were about to sit down at table. "Pshaw!" she responded, "she is now in wood; she will keep for a year."

The soup was eaten in silence. The children, who had been left to themselves all day, now worn out by fatigue, were sleeping soundly on their chairs, and nobody ventured to break the silence.

Suddenly the flame of the lamp went down. Madame Caravan immediately turned up the wick, a hollow sound ensued, and the light went out. They had forgotten to buy oil. To send for it now to the grocer's would keep back the dinner, and they began to look for candles; but none were to be found except the tapers which had been placed upon the table upstairs, in the death chamber.

Madame Caravan, always prompt in her decisions, quickly despatched Marie-Louise to fetch two, and her return was awaited in total darkness.

The footsteps of the girl who had ascended the stairs were distinctly heard. There was silence for a few seconds, and then the child descended precipitately. She threw open the door, and in a choking voice murmured: "Oh! papa, grandmamma is dressing herself!"

Caravan bounded to his feet with such precipitance that his chair fell over against the wall. He stammered out: "You say? . . . What are you saying?"

But Marie-Louise, gasping with emotion, repeated: "Grand . . . grand . . . grandmamma is putting on her clothes, she is coming down stairs."

Caravan rushed boldly up the staircase, followed by his wife, dumfounded; but he came to a stand-



still before the door of the second floor, overcome with terror, not daring to enter. What was he about to see? Madame Caravan, more courageous, turned the handle of the door and stepped forward into the room.

The room seemed to have become darker, and in the middle of it, a tall emaciated figure moved about. The old woman was standing up, and in awakening from her lethargic sleep, before even regaining full consciousness, in turning upon her side, and raising herself on her elbow, she had extinguished three of the candles which burned near the bed. Then, gaining strength, she got off the bed and began to look for her clothes. The absence of her chest of drawers had at first worried her, but, after a little, she had succeeded in finding her things at the bottom of the wooden box, and was now quietly dressing. She emptied the plateful of water, replaced the sprig of box behind the looking-glass, and arranged the chairs in their places, and was ready to go downstairs when there appeared before her her son and daughter-in-law.

Caravan rushed forward, seized her by the hands, embraced her with tears in his eyes, while his wife, who was behind him, repeated in a hypocritical tone of voice: "Oh, what a blessing! Oh, what a blessing!"

But the old woman, without being at all moved, without even appearing to understand, rigid as a statue, and with glazed eyes, simply asked: "Will the dinner soon be ready?"

He stammered out, not knowing what he said:

"O, yes, mother, we have been waiting for you."

And with an alacrity, unusual in him, he took her arm, while Madame Caravan, the younger, seized the candle and lighted them downstairs, walking

backward in front of them, step by step, just as she had done the previous night for her husband, who was carrying the marble.

On reaching the first floor, she almost ran against people who were ascending the stairs. It was the Charenton family, Madame Braux, followed by her husband.

The wife, tall and stout, with a prominent stomach, opened wide her terrified eyes, and was ready to make her escape. The husband, a socialist shoemaker, a little hairy man, the perfect image of a monkey, murmured, quite unconcerned: "Well, what next? Is she resurrected?"

As soon as Madame Caravan recognized them, she made despairing signs to them, then, speaking aloud, she said: "Why, here you are! What a pleasant surprise!"

But Madame Braux, dumfounded, understood nothing; she responded in a low voice: "It was your telegram that brought us; we thought that all was over."

He husband, who was behind her, pinched her to make her keep silent. He added with a sly laugh, which his thick beard concealed: "It was very kind of you to invite us here. We set out post haste;" which remark showed the hostility which had for a long time reigned between the households. Then, just as the old woman reached the last steps, he pushed forward quickly and rubbed his hairy face against her cheeks, shouting in her ear, on account of her deafness: "How well you look, mother; sturdy as usual, hey!"

Madame Braux, in her stupefaction at seeing the old woman alive, whom they all believed to be dead, dared not even embrace her; and her enormous bulk blocked up the passage-way and hindered the others

from advancing. The old woman, uneasy and suspicious, but without speaking, looked at everyone around her; and her little gray eyes, piercing and hard, fixed themselves now on one and now on the other, and they were so full of meaning that the children became frightened.

Caravan, to explain matters said: "She has been somewhat ill, but she is better now; quite well, indeed, are you not, mother?"

Then the good woman, continuing to walk, replied in a husky voice, as though it came from a distance: "It was syncope. I heard you all the while."

An embarrassing silence followed. They entered the dining-room, and in a few minutes all sat down to an improvised dinner.

Only M. Braux had retained his self-possession; his gorilla features grinned wickedly, while he let fall some words of double meaning which painfully disconcerted everyone.

But the door-bell kept ringing every second; and Rosalie, distracted, came to call Caravan, who rushed out, throwing down his napkin. His brother-in-law even asked him whether it was not one of his reception days, to which he stammered out, in answer: "No, only a few packages; nothing more."

A parcel was brought in, which he began to open, carelessly, and the mourning announcements with black borders appeared unexpectedly. Reddening up to the very eyes, he closed the package hurriedly, and pushed it under his waistcoat.

His mother had not seen it! She was looking intently at her clock which stood on the mantel-piece, and the embarrassment increased in midst of a dead silence. Turning her wrinkled face towards her daughter, the old woman, in whose eyes gleamed malice, said: "On Monday you must take me away

from here, so that I can see your little girl. I want so much to see her." Madame Braux, her features illuminated, exclaimed: "Yes, mother, that I will," while Madame Caravan, the younger, who had turned pale, endured the most excruciating agony. The two men, however, gradually drifted into conversation, and soon became embroiled in a political discussion. Braux maintained the most revolutionary and communistic doctrines, his eyes glowing, and gesticulating and throwing about his arms. "Property, sir," he said, "is a robbery perpetrated on the working classes; the land is the common property of every man; hereditary rights are an infamy and a disgrace." But, here, he suddenly stopped, looking as if he had just said something foolish; then, added, in softer tones: "But this is not the proper moment to discuss such things."

The door was opened, and Doctor Chenet appeared. For a moment he seemed bewildered, but regaining his usual smirking expression of countenance, he jauntily approached the old woman, and said: "Aha! mamma, you are better to-day. Oh! I never had any doubt but you would come round again; in fact, I said to myself as I was mounting the staircase, 'I have an idea that I shall find the old lady on her feet once more';" and as he patted her gently on the back: "Ah! she is as solid as the Pont-Neuf; she will bury us all: see if she does not."

He sat down, accepted the coffee that was offered him, and soon began to join in the conversation of the two men; backing up Braux, for he himself had been mixed up in the Commune.

The old woman now feeling herself fatigued, wished to retire. Caravan rushed forward. She looked him steadily in the eye and said: "You, you, must carry my clock and chest of drawers up-

stairs again without a moment's delay." "Yes, mamma," he replied, gasping; "yes, I will do so." The old woman then took the arm of her daughter and withdrew from the room. The two Caravans remained astounded, silent, plunged in the deepest despair, while Braux rubbed his hands and sipped his coffee, gleefully.

Suddenly Madame Caravan, consumed with rage, rushed at him, exclaiming: "You are a thief, a footpad, a cur. I would spit in your face, if . . . I would . . . I . . . would . . ." She could find nothing further to say, suffocating as she was, with rage, while he went on sipping his coffee, with a smile.

His wife returning just then, Madame Caravan attacked her sister-in-law, and the two women—the one with her enormous bulk, the other, epileptic and spare, with changed voices and trembling hands—flew at one another with words of abuse.

Chenet and Braux now interposed, and the later taking his better half by the shoulders pushed her out of the door before him, shouting: "Go on, you slut! you talk too much;" and the two were heard in the street quarreling until they disappeared from sight.

M. Chenet also took his departure, leaving the Caravans alone, face to face. The husband fell back on his chair, and with the cold sweat standing out in beads on his temples, murmured: "What shall I say to my chief to-morrow?"





## COCO



THROUGHOUT the whole countryside the Lucas farm was known as *the* farm. No one knew why. The peasants doubtless attached to this particle "the" a meaning of wealth and of splendor, for this farm was undoubtedly the largest, richest and the best managed in the whole neighborhood.

The immense court, surrounded by five rows of magnificent trees, which sheltered the delicate apple trees from the harsh wind of the plain, inclosed in its confines long brick buildings used for storing fodder and grain, beautiful stables built of hard stones and made to accommodate thirty horses, and a red brick residence which looked like a little château.

Thanks for the good care taken, the dung-heaps were as little offensive as such things can be; the watch-dogs lived in kennels and countless poultry paraded through the tall grass.

Every day, at noon, fifteen persons, masters, farm-hands and the women-folk, seated themselves around the long kitchen table where the soup was brought in steaming in a large, blue-flowered bowl.

The beasts—horses, cows, pigs and sheep—were fat, well fed and clean. Maître Lucas, a tall man who was getting stout, would go around three times a day, overseeing everything and thinking of everything.

A very old white horse, which the mistress wished to keep until its natural death, because she had brought it up and had always used it, and also because it recalled many happy memories, was housed, through sheer kindness of heart, at the back of the stable.

A young scamp about fifteen years old, Isidore Duval by name, and called, for convenience, Zidore, took care of this invalid, gave him his measure of oats and fodder in winter, and, in summer, he was supposed to change his pasturing place four times a day, so that he might have plenty of fresh grass.

The animal, almost crippled, lifted with difficulty his legs, large at the knees and swollen above the hoofs. His hair, which was no longer curried, looked white, and his long eyelashes gave to his eyes a sad expression.

When Zidore took the beast to pasture, he had to pull on the rope with all his might, because it walked so slowly; and the youth, bent over and out of breath, would swear at it, exasperated at having to care for this old nag.

The farm-hands, noticing the young rascal's anger against Coco, were amused and would continually talk of the horse to Zidore, in order to exasperate him. His comrades would make sport with him. In the village he was called Coco-Zidore.

The boy would fume, feeling an unholy desire to revenge himself on the horse. He was a thin, long-legged, dirty child, with thick, coarse, bristly red hair. He seemed only half-witted, and stammered as though ideas were unable to form in his thick, brute-like mind.

For a long time he had been unable to understand why Coco should be kept, indignant at seeing things wasted on this useless beast. Since the horse could no longer work, it seemed to him unjust that he should be fed; he revolted at the idea of wasting oats, oats which were so expensive, on this paralyzed old plug. And often, in spite of the orders of Maître Lucas, he would economize on the nag's food, only giving him half measure. Hatred grew in his confused, childlike mind, the hatred of a stingy, underhanded, fierce, brutal and cowardly peasant.



When summer came he had to move the animal around in the pasture. It was far. The rascal, angrier every morning, would start, with his dragging step, across the wheat-fields. The men working in the fields would shout to him, jokingly:

“Hey! Zidore, remember me to Coco.”

He would not answer; but on the way he would break off a switch, and, as soon as he had moved the old horse, he would let it begin grazing; then, treacherously sneaking up behind it, he would slash its legs. The animal would try to escape, to kick, to get away from the blows, and run around in a circle about its rope, as though it had been inclosed in a circus ring. And the boy would slash away furiously, running along behind, his teeth clenched in anger.

Then he would go away slowly, without turning



around, while the horse watched him disappear, his ribs sticking out, panting as a result of his unusual exertions. Not until the blue blouse of the young peasant was out of sight would he lower his thin white head to the grass.

As the nights were now warm, Coco was allowed to sleep out of doors, in the field behind the little wood. Zidore alone went to see him.

The child threw stones at him to amuse himself. He would sit down on an embankment about ten feet away and would stay there about half an hour, from time to time throwing a sharp stone at the old plug, which remained tied before his enemy, watching him continually and not daring to eat before he was gone.

This one thought stuck in the mind of the young scamp: "Why feed this horse, which is no longer good for anything?" It seemed to him that this old nag was stealing the food of the others, the goods of man and God, that he was even robbing him, Zidore, who was working.

Then, little by little, each day, the boy began to shorten the length of rope which allowed the horse to graze.

The hungry animal was growing thinner and starving. Too feeble to break his bonds, he would stretch his head out toward the tall, green, tempting grass, so near that he could smell and yet so far that he could not touch it.

But one morning Zidore had an idea: it was, not to move Coco any more. He was tired of walking so far for that old skeleton.

He came, however, in order to taste of his vengeance. The beast watched him anxiously. He did not beat him that day. He walked around him with his hands in his pockets. He even made believe change his place, but he sank the stake in exactly the

same hole, and he went away overjoyed with his invention.

The horse, seeing him leave, neighed to call him back; but the rascal began to run, leaving him alone, entirely alone in his field, well tied down and without a blade of grass within reach.

Starving, he tried to reach the grass which he could touch with the end of his nose. He got on his knees, stretching out his neck and his long, drooling lips. All in vain. The old animal spent the whole day in useless, terrible efforts. The sight of all that green food, which stretched out on all sides of him, served to increase the gnawing pangs of hunger.

The scamp did not return that day. He wandered through the woods in search of nests.

The next day he appeared upon the scene again. Coco, exhausted, had lain down. When he saw the child, he got up, expecting at last to have his place changed.

But the little peasant did not even touch the mallet, which was lying on the ground. He came nearer, looked at the animal, threw at his head a clump of earth which flattened out against the white hair, and he started off again, whistling.

The horse remained standing as long as he could see him; then, knowing that his attempts to reach the near-by grass would be hopeless, he once more lay down on his side and closed his eyes.

The following day Zidore did not come.

When he did come at last, he found Coco still stretched out; he noticed that he was dead.

Then he remained standing, looking at him, pleased with what he had done, surprised that it should already be all over. He touched him with his foot, lifted one of his legs and then let it drop, sat on him and remained there, his eyes fixed on the

grass, thinking of nothing. He returned to the farm, but did not mention the accident, because he wished to wander around at the hours when he used to change the horse about.

He went to see him the next day. At his approach some crows flew away. Countless flies were walking over the body and were buzzing around it.

When he returned home, he announced the event. The animal was so old that nobody was surprised. The master said to two of the men:

“Take your shovels and make a hole where he is.”

The men buried the horse at the place where he had died of hunger.

And the grass grew thick, green and vigorous, fed by the poor body.



## RUST

**H**E had always been an ardent lover of sport. When the shooting season was over in the fields and woods he would go out daily in the marsh lands. He hunted from morning till night, summer and winter, spring and autumn, and all kinds of game. He spoke and dreamed of nothing else and would often say:

“How miserable any man must be who does not care for sport!”

And now that he was past fifty, he was healthy, robust, and vigorous, though rather bald. He kept his mustache trimmed, so that it might not cover his lips, and interfere with his blowing the horn.

He was never called by anything but Monsieur Hector, but his full name was Baron Hector Gontran de Coutelier. He lived in a small manor house which he had inherited, in the midst of the woods; and though he knew all the nobility of the department, and met its male representatives out shooting and hunting, he regularly visited only one family, the Courvilles, who were very pleasant neighbors, and had been friends of his family for centuries. In their house he was liked, and made much of, and he used to say: “If I were not a sportsman, I should like to stay here always.”

Monsieur de Courville had been his friend and

comrade from childhood, and lived quietly as a gentleman farmer with his wife, daughter, and son-in-law, Monsieur de Darnetot, who had no business, but made a pretext of being devoted to historical studies.

Baron de Coutelier often dined with his friends, as much to boast of the game he had bagged as for any other reason. He told long stories about dogs and ferrets, of which he spoke as if they were persons of note, whom he knew very well. He analyzed them, and explained their thoughts and motives:

“ When Médor saw that the corn-crake was leading him such a dance, he said to himself: ‘ Wait a bit, my friend, we will have a joke.’ And then, with a jerk of the head to me, to make me go into the corner of the clover-field, he began to quarter the sloping ground, noisily brushing through the clover to drive the bird into a corner from which it could not escape.

“ Everything happened as he had foreseen. Suddenly, the corn-crake found itself on the borders of the clover, and it could not go any further without showing itself; Médor stood and pointed, half-looking round at me, but at a sign from me, he drew up to it, flushed the corn-crake, *bang!* down it came, and Médor, as he brought it to me, wagged his tail, as much as to say: ‘ How about that, Monsieur Hector? ’ ”

Courville, Darnetot, and the two ladies laughed very heartily at these picturesque descriptions into which the Baron threw his whole heart. He became animated, and gesticulated with his arms, and with his whole body; and when he described the death of anything he had killed, he would laugh uproariously and say:

“ Was not that a good shot? ”

As soon as the conversation turned on anything else, he left off listening, and hummed a hunting-song, or a few notes to imitate a hunting-horn.

He had only lived to hunt and shoot, and was growing old, without thinking about it, or suspecting it, when a severe attack of rheumatism confined him to his bed for two months, and he nearly died of grief and weariness.

As he kept no female servant, for an old footman did all the cooking, he could not get any hot poultices, nor could he have any delicate little attentions, nor anything that an invalid requires. His gamekeeper was his sick-nurse; and as the servant found the time hang just as heavily on his hands as it did on his master's, he slept nearly all day and all night in an easy chair, while the Baron in his bed was swearing and flying into a rage.

The ladies of the De Courville family came to see him occasionally, and those were hours of calm and comfort for him. They prepared his herb tea, attended to the fire, served him his breakfast daintily, by the side of his bed, and when they were going away, he would say:

"By Jove! You ought to come and stay here altogether," which made them laugh heartily.

When he was getting better, and was able to go out shooting again, he went to dine with his friends one evening; but he was not at all in his usual spirits. He was tormented by one continual fear—that he might have another attack before the season opened; and when he was taking his leave at night, and the women were wrapping him up in a shawl, and tying a silk handkerchief round his neck, which he allowed to be done for the first time in his life, he said in a disconsolate voice:

"If it goes on like this, I shall be done for."

As soon as he had gone, Madame Darnetot said to her mother:

“ We ought to try to get the Baron married.”

They all raised their hands at the suggestion. How was it that they had never thought of it before? And during all the rest of the evening they discussed the widows whom they knew, and their choice fell on a woman of forty, who was still pretty, fairly rich, very good-tempered and in excellent health, whose name was Madame Berthe Vilers, and, accordingly, she was invited to spend a month at the château. She was very dull at home, and was very glad to come; she was lively and active, and Monsieur de Coutelier took her fancy immediately. She amused herself with him as if he had been a living toy, and spent hours in asking him sly questions about the sentiments of rabbits and the machinations of foxes, and he gravely distinguished between the various ways different animals had of looking at things, and ascribed premeditated plans and subtle arguments to them, just as he did to men of his acquaintance.

The attention she paid him delighted him, and one evening, to show his esteem for her, he asked her to go out shooting with him, which he had never done to any woman before; and the invitation appeared so comical to her that she accepted it.

It was quite an amusement to the family to dress her suitably; everybody offered her something, and she came out in a sort of short riding-skirt with boots and men's breeches, a velvet jacket, which was too tight for her across the chest, and a huntsman's black velvet cap.

The Baron seemed as excited as if he were about to fire his first shot. He minutely explained to her the direction of the wind, and how the different dogs worked. Then he took her into a field, and followed

her as anxiously as a nurse does, when her charge is trying to walk for the first time.

Médor soon began to point, and stopped with his tail out straight, and one paw up, and the Baron, standing behind his pupil, was trembling like a leaf, as he whispered:

“Look out, they are par . . . par . . . partridges.” And almost before he had finished, there was a loud *whirr—whirr*, and a covey of birds flew up in the air, with a tremendous noise.

Madame Vilers was startled, shut her eyes, fired off both barrels and staggered at the recoil of the gun; but when she had recovered her self-possession, she saw that the Baron was dancing about like a madman, and that Médor was bringing back the first of the two partridges which she had killed.

From that day, Monsieur de Coutelier was in love with her, and used to say, raising his eyes: “What a woman!” And he would go and see his friends every evening now, and would talk about shooting.

One day, Monsieur de Courville, who was walking part of the way with him, asked him, suddenly:

“Why don’t you marry her?”

The Baron was altogether taken by surprise, and said:

“What? I? Marry her? . . . Well . . . really . . .”

And he said no more for a while, but then, suddenly shaking hands with his companion, he said:

“Good-by, my friend,” and quickly disappeared in the darkness.

He did not visit them again for three days, but when he did so, he was pale from thinking the matter over, and graver than usual. Taking Monsieur de Courville aside, he said:



"That was a capital idea of yours; try to persuade her to accept me, for one might say that a woman like her was made for me, and you and I shall be able to have some sort of sport together, all the year round."

As Monsieur de Courville felt certain that his friend would not meet with a refusal, he replied:

"Propose to her, immediately, my dear fellow, or would you rather that I did it for you?"

But the Baron grew suddenly nervous, and said, with some hesitation:

"No . . . no . . . I must go to Paris for . . . for a few days. As soon as I come back, I will give you a definite answer." No other explanation was forthcoming, and he started the next morning.

He made a long stay. One, two, three weeks passed, but Monsieur de Coutelier did not return, and the Courvilles, who were surprised and uneasy, did not know what to say to their friend, whom they had informed of the Baron's wishes. Every other day they sent to the house for news of him, but none of his servants had had a line.

But one evening, while Madame Vilers was singing, and accompanying herself on the piano, a servant appeared with a mysterious air, and told Monsieur de Courville that a gentleman wanted to see him. It was the Baron, in a traveling suit. He looked much altered and older, and as soon as he saw his old friend, he seized both his hands, and said, in a somewhat tired voice: "I have just returned, my dear friend, and I have come to you immediately; I am thoroughly exhausted."

Then he hesitated in visible embarrassment, and presently said:

"I wished to tell you . . . immediately

. . . that that business . . . you know what I mean . . . must come to nothing."

Monsieur de Courville looked at him in stupefaction. "Must come to nothing? . . . Why?"

"Oh! Do not ask me, please; it would be too painful for me to tell you; but you may rest assured that I am acting like an honorable man. I cannot . . . I have no right . . . no right, you understand, to marry this lady, and I will wait until she has gone, before coming here again; it would be too painful for me to see her. Good-by." And he fairly ran away.

The whole family deliberated and discussed the matter, surmising a thousand things. The conclusion they came to was, that the Baron's past life concealed some great mystery, that, perhaps, he had natural children, or some *liaison* of long standing. At any rate, the matter seemed serious, and so as to avoid any difficult complications, they adroitly informed Madame Vilers of the state of affairs, and she returned home just as much of a widow as she had come.

Three months passed, when one evening, when he had dined rather too well and was rather unsteady on his legs, Monsieur de Coutelier, who was smoking a pipe with Monsieur de Courville, said to him:

"You would really pity me, if you only knew how continually I am thinking about your friend."

De Courville, who had been rather annoyed at the Baron's behavior in the matter, told him exactly what he thought of him:

"By Jove, my good friend, when a man has any secrets in his existence, as you have, he does not at once make advances to a woman, as you did; for you must surely have foreseen that you would have to draw back."

The Baron left off smoking in some confusion.

"Yes and no; at any rate, I could not have guessed at what actually happened."

Whereupon, Monsieur de Courville lost patience, and replied:

"One ought to foresee everything."

But Monsieur de Coutelier replied in a low voice, in case anybody should be listening: "I see that I have hurt your feelings, and will tell you everything, so that you may forgive me. You know that for twenty years, I have lived only for sport; I care for nothing else, and think about nothing else. Consequently, when I was on the point of undertaking certain obligations with regard to this lady, I felt some scruples of conscience. I did not know whether I was still capable of . . . of . . . you know what I mean . . . Just think! It is exactly sixteen years since . . . I for the last time . . . you understand what I mean. In this neighborhood, it is not easy to . . . you know. And then, I had other things to do. I prefer to use my gun, and so before entering into an engagement before the Mayor and the priest to . . . well, I was frightened. I said to myself: 'Confound it; suppose I missed fire!' An honorable man always keeps his engagements, and in this case, I was undertaking sacred duties with regard to this lady, and so, to feel sure, I made up my mind to go and spend a week in Paris.

"At the end of that time, nothing, absolutely occurred. I always lost . . . I waited for a fortnight, three weeks, continually hoping. In the restaurants, I ate a number of highly seasoned dishes, which upset my stomach, and . . . and it was still the same thing . . . or rather, nothing. You will, therefore, understand, that, in such circumstances, and having assured myself of the fact,

the only thing I could do was . . . was . . . to withdraw; and I did so."

Monsieur de Courville had to struggle very hard, not to laugh, and he shook hands with the Baron, saying:

"I am very sorry for you," and accompanied him half-way home.

When he got back, and was alone with his wife, he told her everything, nearly choking with laughter; she, however, did not laugh, but listened very attentively, and when her husband had finished, she said, very seriously:

"The Baron is a fool, my dear; he was frightened, that is all. I will write and ask Berthe to come back here as soon as possible."

And when Monsieur de Courville observed that their friend had made such long and useless attempts, she merely said:

"Nonsense! When a man loves his wife, you know . . . that sort of thing adjusts itself to the situation."

And Monsieur de Courville made no reply, as he felt rather confused himself.





## THE LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION



HE never would have dreamed of such good fortune! Son of a simple bailiff, Jean Marin had come, like many others, to study law in the Latin Quarter. In the different cafés which he had frequented he had made friends with several loquacious students who wrangled over politics while drinking their beer. He was filled with admiration for them and followed them obstinately from café to café, even paying for the drinks when he had the money.

When he had reached the dignified position of a barrister, he pleaded cases, which he lost. One morning he read in the paper that one of his old friends from the Quarter had been elected to the House.

He once more became his faithful dog, the friend who does the odd jobs, for whom one sends when in need of him and with whom you act just as if you were alone. Somehow or other the deputy became

a Cabinet Minister; six months later Jean Marin was appointed a State Councilor.



First of all, he suffered from a terrible attack of vanity. He would walk through the streets for the pleasure of showing himself, as though people could guess his position just from seeing him. He managed to tell all the store-keepers, the newsboys, even the hack drivers on the slightest provocation:

"I am a State Councilor."

Then, naturally, as a result of his dignity, as a matter of professional necessity, of duty on the part of a powerful and generous man, he felt an uncontrollable need to protect someone. He would offer his aid to everybody, on all occasions, with inexhaustible generosity.

When he met an acquaintance on the street, he would hasten forward with a delighted look, shake hands, inquire about the man's health, and then, without waiting for any questions, he would say:

"You know, I am a State Councilor and always at your service. If I can be useful to you in anything, make use of me freely. In my position, I can do a good deal."

Then he would enter some café with his companion and ask for pen and ink and a sheet of paper: "Just one, waiter; it's to write a letter of recommendation."

How many letters of recommendation he would write—ten, twenty, fifty a day! He would write them at the American Café, at Bignon's, at Tortoni's, at the Maison-Dorée, at the Café Riche, at the English Café, at the Neapolitan—everywhere, everywhere. He wrote them to every official of the Republic, from

judges to ministers. He was happy, perfectly happy.



One morning, as he was leaving his house to go to a meeting of the Council, it began to rain. He was undecided as to whether or not he should take a cab; finally he decided not to take one, and he walked through the streets.

The shower was getting terrible; it was flooding the streets and the sidewalks. M. Marin was forced to take shelter in a doorway. An old, white-haired priest was already there. Before becoming State Councilor, M. Marin did not like the clergy. Now he treated them with the consideration due them, since a cardinal had politely consulted him about a difficult matter. The rain was now pouring down in torrents, compelling the two men to retreat as far as the janitor's booth, in order to avoid being splashed by the passing wagons. M. Marin, who was always itching to talk and to make an impression on people declared:

"This certainly is nasty weather, Monsieur l'Abbé."

The old priest bowed:

"Oh! yes, Monsieur, it is very disagreeable, especially to a stranger, who is in Paris only for a few days."

"Ah! You are from the country?"

"Yes, Monsieur; I am only here for a short stay."

"It must, indeed, be very disagreeable to have rain during the few days which one spends in the capital. We officials who spend the whole year here do not mind it very much."

The priest did not answer. He was watching

the street, where the rain was falling more slowly. Suddenly, making up his mind, he lifted up his cassock just as the women lift up their dresses to cross the street.

M. Marin, seeing him leaving, cried:

"You will get drenched, Monsieur l'Abbé. Wait a few minutes more and it will stop."

The old man, undecided, stopped, and then said:

"You see, I am in a good deal of a hurry. I have a very important engagement."

M. Marin seemed to be greatly distressed:

"But you will be wet to the skin. Might I ask in what direction you are going?"

The priest seemed to hesitate, and then he answered:

"I am going toward the Palais-Royal."

"In that case, Monsieur l'Abbé, allow me to offer you the shelter of my umbrella. I am going to the State Council. I am one of the Councilors."

The old priest pricked up his ears, looked at his neighbor and then said:

"Thank you very much, Monsieur; I accept with pleasure."

Then M. Marin took him by the arm and dragged him along. He directed, watched over and advised him.

"Look out for this puddle, Monsieur l'Abbé. Look out especially for the wheels of the carriages; sometimes they splash you from head to foot. Be very careful of the umbrellas of the people who pass by; there is nothing more dangerous for the eyes. The women especially are most unbearable; they pay attention to nothing and they stick the points of their umbrellas or parasols right into your eyes. They never get out of the way for anybody. One might think that the city belonged to them. They



rule over the sidewalk and the street. For my part, I find that their education has been sadly neglected."

M. Marin began to laugh.

The priest did not answer. He walked bent forward a little, carefully choosing the places where he stepped, so as to get neither his shoes nor his cassock muddy.

M. Marin continued:

"You have probably come to Paris for a little vacation?"

The man answered:

"No, I have some business to do here."

"Ah! Important business? Might I ask what it is? If I could be of any use to you, I would like to place myself at your disposal."

The priest seemed embarrassed. He murmured:

"Oh! it's just a little personal business. A little trouble with—with my bishop. It would not interest you. It's an—an affair of internal complications—of—of—ecclesiastical matters."

M. Marin insisted:

"But it is just the State Council which regulates those matters. In that case, make use of me."

"Yes, Monsieur; it is to the State Council that I am going. You are too kind. I have to see Monsieur Lerepère and Monsieur Savon, and also, perhaps, Monsieur Petitpas."

M. Marin stopped short.

"Why, those are my best friends, Monsieur l'Abbé, my very best friends, excellent colleagues, charitable people! I shall recommend you to the three of them, and warmly too. You may count on me."

The priest overwhelmed him with thanks, stammered excuses and wished him all kinds of blessings.

M. Marin was delighted:

"Ah! you may flatter yourself that you are a mighty lucky man, Monsieur l'Abbé. You see if, thanks to me, your affair doesn't run through smoothly."

They had arrived at the Council. M. Marin brought the priest up to his office, gave him a chair and seated him before the fire, while he sat down and began to write:

"My dear colleague, allow me to recommend to you most warmly a venerable priest, one of the most worthy and most deserving, Monsieur l'Abbé——"

He interrupted himself and asked:

"What is your name, please?"

"Abbé Ceinture."

M. Marin once more started to write:

"M. l'Abbé Ceinture, who needs your good offices for a little matter of which he will speak to you.

"I am happy for this occasion which allows me, my dear colleague——"

And he ended with the usual compliments.

When he had finished the three letters he gave them to his *protégé*, who left, after thanking him in the warmest and most effusive manner.



M. Marin finished his business, returned home, spent the day quietly, slept peacefully, awoke pleased and had the newspapers brought him.

The first one which he opened was a radical sheet. He read:

#### Our Clergy and our Officials.

When shall we be able to cease calling attention to the misdeeds of the clergy? A certain priest, named Ceinture, convicted of having conspired against the present government, accused of shameful deeds which we shall not even mention, suspected of being a Jesuit metamorphosed into a simple priest, dismissed by a bishop for motives which are said to be unmentionable, and called to Paris in order that

he might furnish explanations for his conduct, has found an ardent champion in a person by the name of Marin, a State Councilor, who did not hesitate to give this becassocked rascal most urgent letters of recommendation to all the officials, his Republican colleagues.

We call the attention of the Minister to the inexcusable conduct of this councilor—

M. Marin jumped out of bed, pulled on his clothes and ran over to see his colleague Petitpas, who said to him:

“What’s the matter with you? Are you crazy, that you recommend to me that old plotter?”

M. Marin, bewildered, stammered:

“No—you see—I was deceived. He looked like a worthy man—he deceived me—he basely deceived me. Please have him convicted. I shall write a letter. Tell me to whom I should write, in order to have him convicted. I will go to the district attorney and the Archbishop of Paris—yes, the Archbishop.”

Quickly sitting down before M. Petitpas’ desk, he wrote:

MONSEIGNEUR—I have the honor of bringing to your very reverend attention the fact that I have been the victim of a certain Abbé Ceinture, who misused my good-will.

Deceived by the protestations of this priest, I.....

Then, when he had signed and sealed the letter, he turned to his colleague and said:

“My friend, let this be a lesson to you—never recommend anybody.”



## DUCHOUX

**B**ARON DE MORDIANE kept his fur coat unbuttoned as he descended the wide staircase of the club, which was like a hot-house from the heat of a stove, and when he reached the street a shiver ran over him, one of those shivers that come when the system is depressed. For he had lost some money and his digestion had troubled him for some time, so that he could not eat what he enjoyed.

He went back to his own residence; and, suddenly, the thought of his great, empty apartment, of his footman asleep in the ante-chamber, of the dressing-room in which the water was kept warm for his evening toilet on a gas stove, the large, antique, solemn-looking bed like a mortuary couch, caused another chill to penetrate his whole being.

For some years past he had felt weighing down on him that load of solitude which sometimes crushes old bachelors. Formerly, he had been strong, lively, and gay, giving his days to sport and his nights to festive gatherings. Now, he had grown dull, and no longer took pleasure in anything. Exercise fatigued him; suppers and even dinners made him ill; women annoyed him as much as they had formerly amused him.

The monotony of evenings all alike, of always meeting the same friends in the same place, at the club, of the same game with a good hand and a run

of luck, of the same talk on the same topics, of the same witty remarks by the same lips, of the same jokes on the same themes, of the same scandals about the same women, disgusted him so much as to make him feel at times a veritable inclination to commit suicide. He could not lead this regular, inane life, so commonplace, so frivolous and so dull at the same time, and he felt a longing for something tranquil, restful, comfortable, without knowing what.

He certainly did not think of getting married, for he did not feel he had sufficient fortitude to submit to that melancholy, conjugal servitude, to that hateful existence of two beings, who, always together, know each other so well that one cannot utter a word which the other would not anticipate, could not make a single movement which would not be foreseen, could not have any thought, desire, or opinion which would not be divined. He considered that a woman was interesting only when you knew her but slightly, when there is something mysterious and unexplored attached to her, when she remains an enigma, hidden behind a veil. Therefore, what he would desire would be a family without family life, wherein he might spend only a portion of his existence. But he was also haunted by the recollection of his son.

For the past year, he had been constantly thinking of this, feeling an irritating desire springing up within him to see him, to renew acquaintance with him. He had become the father of this child while still a young man, in the midst of dramatic and touching incidents. The boy, despatched to the South, had been brought up near Marseilles without ever hearing of his father's name.

The latter had at first paid for the child from month to month for his nurture, education, and the expense of holidays, and finally had provided an

allowance for him on his making a sensible match. A discreet notary had acted as an intermediary, without ever disclosing anything.

The Baron de Mordiane accordingly knew merely that a child of his was living somewhere in the neighborhood of Marseilles, that he was looked upon as intelligent and well-educated, and that he had married the daughter of an architect and contractor to whose business he had succeeded. He was also believed to be wealthy.

Why should he not go and see this unknown son without telling his name, in order to form an opinion about him, and to assure himself whether, in case of necessity, he might find an agreeable refuge in this family?

He had acted handsomely toward the young man, had settled a good fortune on him, which had been thankfully accepted. He was, therefore, certain that he would not find himself clashing against any inordinate sense of self-importance; and this thought, this desire, of setting out for the South, which was renewed each day, tantalized him like a kind of irritant. A strange selfish feeling of affection also attracted him as he pictured this pleasant, warm abode by the seaside, where he would meet his young and pretty daughter-in-law, his grandchildren with outstretched arms, and his son who would recall to his memory the charming and short-lived adventure of bygone years. He regretted only having given so much money, and that this money had prospered in the young man's hands, thus preventing him from any longer presenting himself in the character of a benefactor.

He hurried along with the collar of his fur coat turned up, his mind full of all these thoughts. Suddenly he made up his mind. A cab was passing; he

hailed it, drove home, and, when his valet, just roused from a nap, had opened the door, he said:

“ Louis, we start to-morrow evening for Marseilles. We will remain there perhaps a fortnight. You will make all the necessary preparations.”

The train rushed on past the Rhône with its sand-banks, then through yellow plains, bright villages, and a wide expanse of country, shut in by bare mountains, which rose on the distant horizon.

The Baron de Mordiane, waking up after a night spent in a sleeping compartment, looked at himself, in a melancholy fashion, in the little mirror of his dressing-case. The glaring sun of the South showed him some wrinkles which he had not observed before, —a condition of decrepitude unnoticed in the imperfect light of Parisian rooms. He thought, as he examined the corners of his eyes, and saw the wrinkled lids, the temples, the skinny forehead:

“ Damn it, I’ve not merely got the gloss taken off —I’ve become quite an old fogey.”

And his desire for rest suddenly increased, with a vague yearning, born in him for the first time, to take his grandchildren on his knees.

About one o’clock in the afternoon, the Baron arrived in a landau, which he had hired at Marseilles, at the gate of one of those houses of Southern France so dazzlingly white, at the end of their avenues of plane-trees, that they almost blind one at first. He smiled as he pursued his way along the avenue leading to the house, and reflected:

“ Deuce take it! this is a nice place.”

Suddenly, a young rogue of five or six darted out of a shrubbery, and remained standing at the side of the path, staring at the gentleman with eyes wide open.

Mordiane came over to him :

“ Good morning, my boy.”

The child made no reply.

The Baron, stooping down, took him up in his arms to kiss him, but the smell of garlic with which the child seemed impregnated almost suffocated him and he quickly put him down again on the ground, muttering :

“ Oh ! it is the gardener’s son.”

And he proceeded toward the house.

The linen was hanging out to dry on a line before the door—shirts and chemises, napkins, dish-cloths, aprons, and sheets, while a row of socks, hanging from strings one above the other, filled up an entire window, like sausages exposed for sale in front of a pork-butcher’s shop.

The Baron announced his arrival. A servant-girl appeared, a true servant of the South, dirty and untidy, with her hair hanging in wisps over her face, while her petticoat under the accumulation of stains which had soiled it had retained only a certain uncouth remnant of its former color, and might have done for the particolored suit of a clown.

He asked :

“ Is Monsieur Duchoux at home ? ”

He had many years ago, in the mocking spirit of a cynical man of pleasure, given this name to the foundling in order that it might not be forgotten that he had been picked up under a cabbage.

The servant-girl asked :

“ Do you want Monsieur Duchoux ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Well, he is in the big room, drawing some plans.”

“ Tell him that Monsieur Merlin wishes to speak to him.”



She replied, in amazement:

“ Hey! go inside then, if you want to see him.”

And she bawled out:

“ Mo’sieu Duchoux—a caller.”

The Baron entered, and in a spacious apartment, darkened by the windows being half-closed, he indistinctly traced out persons and things, which appeared to him very slovenly.

Standing in front of a table laden with articles of every sort, a little bald man was tracing lines on a large sheet of paper.

He interrupted his work, and advanced two steps. His waistcoat left open, his unbuttoned breeches, and his turned-up shirt-sleeves, indicated that he felt hot, and his muddy shoes showed that it had been raining hard for some days.

He asked with a very pronounced southern accent:

“ Whom have I the honor of—? ”

“ Monsieur Merlin; I came to consult you about the purchase of a building lot.”

“ Ha! ha! that is good.”

And Duchoux, turning toward his wife, who was knitting in the shade, said:

“ Clear off a chair, Josephine.”

Mordiane then saw a young woman, who appeared already old, as women look old at twenty-five in the provinces, for want of attention to their persons, of regular baths, and all the little cares bestowed on the feminine toilet that freshen and preserve, till the age of fifty, the charm and beauty of the sex. With a kerchief over her shoulders, her hair clumsily braided—though it was lovely hair, thick and black, you could see that it was badly brushed—she stretched out hands like those of a servant, and removed an infant’s robe, a knife, a

fag-end of packthread, an empty flower-pot, and a greasy plate left on the seat of a chair, which she then moved over towards the visitor.

He sat down, and presently noticed that Duchoux's work-table had on it, in addition to the books and papers, two lettuces recently gathered, a wash-basin, a hair-brush, a napkin, a revolver, and a number of cups which had not been washed.

The architect perceived this look, and said with a smile:

"Excuse us! The room is rather untidy—owing to the children."

And he drew over his chair in order to chat with his client.

"So you are looking out for a piece of ground in the neighborhood of Marseilles?"

His breath carried toward the Baron that odor of garlic which the people of the South exhale as flowers do their perfume.

Mordiane asked:

"Is it your son that I met under the plane-trees?"

"Yes. Yes, the second."

"You have two of them?"

"Three, Monsieur, one a year."

And Duchoux looked full of pride.

The Baron was thinking to himself:

"If they all have the same perfume, their nursery must be a real conservatory."

He continued:

"Yes, I would like a nice piece of ground near the sea, on a little solitary strip of beach——"

Thereupon Duchoux proceeded to explain. He had ten, twenty, fifty, a hundred, or more, pieces of ground of the kind required, at different prices and suited to different tastes. He talked just as a foun-

tain flows, smiling, self-satisfied, wagging his bald round head.

And Mordiane was reminded of a little woman, fair-haired, slight, with a somewhat melancholy look, and a tender fashion of murmuring, "My darling," the mere remembrance of which made the blood stir in his veins. She had loved him passionately, madly, for three months; then, becoming *en-ceinte* in the absence of her husband, who was governor of a colony, she had run away and concealed herself, distracted with despair and terror, till the birth of the child, which Mordiane carried off one summer's evening, and which they had not laid eyes on afterward.

She died of consumption three years later, in the colony of which her husband was governor, and whither she had gone to join him. And here before him was their son who was saying, in metallic tones as he rang out his closing words:

"This piece of ground, Monsieur, is a rare bargain——"

And Mordiane recalled the other voice, light as the touch of a gentle breeze, as it used to murmur: "My darling, we shall never part——"

And he remembered the soft, deep, devoted glance in those blue eyes, as he watched the round vacant eyes, though also blue, of this ridiculous little man, who, in spite of all, bore a resemblance to his mother.

Yes, he looked more and more like her every moment—like her in accent, in movement, in his entire deportment—he resembled her, but as an ape does a man. Still he was hers; he displayed a thousand external characteristics peculiar to her, though in an unspeakably distorted, irritating, and revolting form.

The Baron was galled, haunted as he was all of a

sudden by this resemblance, horrible, each instant growing stronger, exasperating, maddening torturing him like a nightmare, like a weight of remorse.

He stammered out:

"When can we look at this piece of ground together?"

"Why, to-morrow, if you like."

"Well, yes, to-morrow. At what hour?"

"One o'clock."

"Very well."

The child he had met in the avenue appeared before the open door, exclaiming:

"Dada!"

There was no answer.

Mordiane had risen up with a longing to escape, to run off, which made his legs tremble. This "dada" had hit him like a bullet. It was to *him* that it was addressed, it was intended for him, this "dada," smelling of garlic—this "dada" of the South.

Oh! how sweet had been the perfume exhaled by her, his sweetheart of bygone days!

Duchoux saw him to the door.

"This house is your own?" said the Baron.

"Yes, Monsieur; I bought it recently. And I am proud of it. I am a child of accident, Monsieur, and I don't want to hide it. I am proud of it. I owe nothing to anyone; I am the son of my own efforts; I owe everything to myself."

The little boy, who remained on the threshold, kept still exclaiming, though at some distance away from them:

"Dada!"

Mordiane, shaking as with a chill, seized with panic, fled as one flees from a great danger.

"He is about to guess who I am, to recognize

me," he thought. "He is about to take me in his arms, and call out to me, 'dada' while giving me a kiss perfumed with garlic."

"To-morrow, Monsieur."

"To-morrow, at one o'clock."

The landau rolled over the white road.

"Coachman! to the railway-station!"

And he heard two voices, one far-away and sweet, the faint, sad voice of the dead, saying: "My darling," and the other sonorous, sing-song, frightful, bawling out, "Dada," just as people bawl out "Stop him!" when a thief is flying through the street.

Next evening, as he entered the club, the Count d'Etreillis said to him:

"We have not seen you for the last three days. Have you been ill?"

"Yes, a little indisposed. I get these headaches from time to time."





## DENIS

### I

*To Léon Chapron*



ARAMBOT opened the letter which his servant Denis gave him, and smiled.

For twenty years Denis had been serving in this house. He was a short, stocky, jovial man, who was known throughout the country-side as a model servant. He asked:

“Is Monsieur pleased? Has Monsieur received good news?”

M. Marambot was not rich. He was an old village druggist, a bachelor, who lived on an income acquired with difficulty by selling drugs to the farmers. He answered:

“Yes, my boy. Old man Malois is afraid of the law-suit with which I am threatening him. I shall get my money to-morrow. Five thousand francs are not liable to harm the account of an old bachelor.”

M. Marambot rubbed his hands with satisfaction. He was a man of a quiet temperament, more sad than gay, incapable of any prolonged effort, careless in business.

He could undoubtedly have amassed a greater income had he taken advantage of the deaths of colleagues established in more important centers by taking their places and carrying on their business. But the trouble of moving and the thought of all the preparations had always stopped him. After thinking the matter over for a few days, he would be satisfied to say:

“Bah! I’ll wait until the next time. I’ll not lose anything by the delay. I may even find something better.”

Denis, on the contrary, was always urging his master to new enterprises. Of a lively temperament, he would continually repeat:

“Oh! If I had only had the capital to start out with, I could have made a fortune! One thousand francs would do me.”

M. Marmabot would smile without answering and would go out in his little garden, where, his hands behind his back, he would walk around, dreaming.

All day long, Denis sang the joyful refrains of the folk-songs of the neighborhood. He even showed an unusual activity, for he cleaned all the windows of the house, energetically rubbing the glass, and singing at the top of his voice.

M. Marambot, surprised at his zeal, told him several times, smiling:

“My boy, if you work like that there will be nothing left for you to do to-morrow.”

The following day, at about nine o’clock in the morning, the postman gave Denis four letters for his master, one of them very heavy. M. Marmabot im-

mediately shut himself up in his room until late in the afternoon. He then handed his servant four letters for the mail. One of them was addressed to M. Malois; it was undoubtedly a receipt for the money.

Denis asked his master no questions; he appeared to be as sad and gloomy that day as he had seemed joyful the day before.

Night came. M. Marambot went to bed as usual and slept.

He was awakened by a strange noise. He sat up in his bed and listened. Suddenly the door opened, and Denis appeared, holding in one hand a candle and in the other a carving-knife, his eyes staring, his face contracted as though moved by some deep emotion; he was as pale as a ghost.

M. Marambot, astonished, thought that he was sleep-walking, and he was going to get out of bed and assist him when the servant blew out the light and rushed for the bed. His master stretched out his hands to receive the shock which knocked him over on his back; he was trying to seize the hands of his servant, whom he now thought to be crazy, in order to avoid the blows which the latter was aiming at him.

He was struck by the knife; once in the shoulder, once in the forehead and the third time in the chest. He fought wildly, waving his arms around in the darkness, kicking and crying:

“ Denis! Denis! Are you mad? Listen, Denis! ”

But the latter, gasping for breath, kept up his furious attack, always striking, always repulsed, sometimes with a kick, sometimes with a punch, and rushing forward again furiously.

M. Marambot was wounded twice more, once in the leg and once in the stomach. But suddenly a



thought flashed across his mind, and he began to shriek:

"Stop, stop, Denis, I have not yet received my money!"

The man immediately ceased, and his master could hear his labored breathing in the darkness.

M. Marambot immediately went on:

"I have received nothing. M. Malois takes back what he said, the law-suit will take place; that is why you carried the letters to the mail. Just read those on my desk."

With a final effort, he reached for his matches and lit the candle.

He was covered with blood. His sheets, his curtains, and even the walls, were spattered with red. Denis, standing in the middle of the room, was also bloody from head to foot.

When he saw that, M. Marambot thought himself dead, and he fell unconscious.

At the break of day he revived. It was some time, however, before he regained his senses, and was able to understand or remember. But suddenly the memory of the attack and of his wounds returned to him, and he was filled with such fright that he closed his eyes in order not to see anything. After a few minutes he grew calmer and began to think. He had not died immediately, therefore he might still recover. He felt weak, very weak; but he had no real pain, although he noticed an uncomfortable smarting sensation in several parts of his body. He also felt icy cold, and all wet, and as though wrapped up in bandages. He thought that this dampness came from the blood which he had lost; and he shivered at the dreadful thought of this red liquid which had come from his veins and covered his bed. The idea of seeing this terrible

spectacle again so upset him that he kept his eyes closed with all his strength, as though they might open in spite of himself.

What had become of Denis? He had probably escaped.

But what could he, Marambot, do now? Get up? Call for help? But if he should make the slightest motions, his wounds would undoubtedly open up again and he would die from loss of blood.

Suddenly he heard the door of his room open. His heart almost stopped. It was certainly Denis who was coming to finish him up. He held his breath in order to make the murderer think that he had been successful.

He felt his sheet being lifted up, and then someone feeling his stomach. A sharp pain near his hip made him start. He was being very gently washed with cold water. Therefore, someone must have discovered the misdeed and he was being cared for. A wild joy seized him; but prudently, he did not wish to show that he was conscious. He opened one eye, just one, with the greatest precaution.

He recognized Denis standing beside him, Denis himself! Mercy! He hastily closed his eye again.

Denis! What could he be doing? What did he want? What awful scheme could he now be carrying out?

What was he doing? Well, he was washing him in order to hide the traces of his crime! And he would now bury him in the garden, under ten feet of earth, so that no one could discover him! Or perhaps under the wine cellar! And M. Marambot began to tremble like a leaf. He kept saying to himself: "I am lost, lost!" He closed his eyes so as not to see the knife as it descended for the final stroke. It did not come. Denis was now lifting him

up and bandaging him. Then he began carefully to dress the wound on his leg, as his master had taught him to do.

There was no longer any doubt. His servant, after wishing to kill him, was trying to save him.

Then M. Marambot, in a dying voice, gave him this practical piece of advice:

"Wash the wounds in a dilute solution of carbolic acid!"

Denis answered:

"That is what I am doing, Monsieur."

M. Marambot opened both his eyes. There was no sign of blood either on the bed, on the walls, or on the murderer. The wounded man was stretched out on clean white sheets.

The two men looked at each other.

Finally M. Marambot said calmly:

"You have been guilty of a great crime."

Denis answered:

"I am trying to make up for it, Monsieur. If you will not tell on me, I will serve you as faithfully as in the past."

This was no time to anger his servant. M. Marambot murmured as he closed his eyes:

"I swear not to tell on you."

## II

Denis saved his master. He spent days and nights without sleep, never leaving the sick-room, preparing drugs, broths, potions, feeling his pulse, anxiously counting the beats, attending him with the skill of a trained nurse and the devotion of a son.

He was all the time asking:

" Well, Monsieur, how do you feel? "

M. Marambot would answer in a weak voice:

" A little better, my boy, thank you."

And when the sick man would wake up at night, he would often see his servant seated in an armchair, weeping silently.

Never had the old druggist been so cared for, so fondled, so spoiled. At first he had said to himself:

" As soon as I am well I shall get rid of this rascal."

He was now convalescing, and from day to day he would put off dismissing his murderer. He thought that no one would ever have such care and attentions for him, since he held this man through fear; and he warned him that he had left a document with a lawyer denouncing him to the law if any new accident should occur.

This precaution seemed to guarantee him against any future attack; and he then asked himself if it would not be wiser to keep this man near him, in order to watch him closely.

Just as formerly, when he would hesitate about taking some more important store, he could not make up his mind to any decision.

" There is always time," he would say to himself.

Denis continued to show himself an admirable servant. M. Marambot was well. He kept him.

One morning, just as he was finishing breakfast, he suddenly heard a great noise in the kitchen. He hastened in there. Denis was struggling with two gendarmes. An officer was taking notes on his pad.

As soon as he saw his master, the servant began to sob, exclaiming:

" You told on me, Monsieur; that's not right, after what you had promised me. You have broken

your word of honor, Monsieur Marambot; that's not right, that's not right! "

M. Marambot, bewildered and distressed at being suspected, lifted his hand:

" I swear to you before the Lord, my boy, that I did not tell on you. I haven't the slightest idea how the police could have found out about your attack on me."

The officer started:

" You say that he attacked you, Monsieur? "

The bewildered druggist answered:

" Yes—but I did not tell on him—I haven't said a word—I swear it—he has served me excellently from that time on—"

The officer pronounced severely:

" I will take down your testimony. The law will take notice of this new action, of which it was ignorant, Monsieur Marambot. I was commissioned to arrest your servant for the theft of two ducks lately stolen by him from Monsieur Duhamel, for which action there are witnesses. I shall take notice of your information."

Then, turning toward his men, he ordered:

" Come on, bring him along! "

The two gendarmes dragged Denis out.

### III

The lawyer used a plea of insanity, contrasting the two misdeeds in order to strengthen his argument. He had clearly proved that the theft of the two ducks came from the same mental condition as the eight knife-wounds in the body of Marambot. He had cunningly analyzed all the phases of this transitory condition of mental aberration, which

could, doubtless, be cured by a few months' treatment in a reputable sanatorium. He had spoken in enthusiastic turns of the continued devotion of this faithful servant, of the care with which he had surrounded his master, wounded by him in a moment of alienation.

Touched by this memory, M. Marambot felt the tears rising to his eyes.

The lawyer noticed it, opened his arms with a broad gesture, spreading out the long black sleeves of his robe like the wings of a bat, and exclaimed:

"Look, look, gentleman of the jury, look at those tears. What more can I say for my client? What speech, what argument, what reasoning would be worth these tears of his master? They speak louder than I do, louder than the law; they cry: 'Mercy for the poor wandering mind of a while ago!' They implore, they pardon, they bless!"

He was silent and sat down.

Then the judge, turning to Marambot, whose testimony had been excellent for his servant, asked him:

"But, Monsieur, even admitting that you consider this man insane, that does not explain why you should have kept him. He was none the less dangerous."

Marambot, wiping his eyes, answered:

"Well, your honor, what can you expect? Nowadays it's so hard to find good servants—I could never have found a better one."

Denis was acquitted and put in a sanatorium, at his master's expense.



## THE MODEL



ON a beautiful July day the sun was shining down on the little crescent-shaped town of Étretat, with its white cliffs, shiny pebbles and blue sea. At either end of the crescent were two points of land, the little one to the right, the big one to the left, stretched out into the quiet water.

On the beach, along the water, a crowd was watching the bathers. On the porch of the Casino another crowd, some resting, some walking, was displaying under the bright sky a wonderful garden of beautiful dresses set off by red and blue parasols, on which were embroidered large silk flowers.

On the walk, at the end of the porch, other people, the quiet ones, were walking about slowly, far from the elegant throng.

A well-known young man, a famous painter, Jean Summer, was strolling along sadly beside a little invalid's chair, in which a young woman was resting, his wife. A servant was slowly pushing this rolling armchair and the cripple was sadly contemplating the bright sky, the beautiful day, and the joy of others.

They did not speak to each other. They did not look at each other.

"Let us stop a minute," said the woman.

They stopped, and the artist sat on a little camp-chair, offered him by the servant.

Those passing near the silent and motionless couple looked at them pityingly. There was a regular legend concerning his devotion. It claimed that, moved by her love, he had married her notwithstanding her infirmity.

Not far away two young men, seated on a capstan with their looks lost in the distance, were talking.

"No, that's not so; I tell you that I know Jean Summer very well."

"But then why did he marry her? She was already crippled at the time of the marriage, wasn't she?"

"Certainly. He married her . . . well . . . foolishly, of course!"

"Well? . . ."

"There is no 'well,' my friend, there is no 'well.' A man is a fool because he is a fool. And then, you know very well that artists have the specialty of contracting ridiculous marriages; almost all of them marry models, former sweethearts, wrecks of every description. Why? Who knows! One would think that constant intercourse with the genus model would disgust them forever with this class of females. Not at all. After having them pose for them they marry them. Just read that little book by Alphonse Daudet: *Artists' Wives*.

"For the couple which you see there, the accident was produced in a peculiar and terrible manner. The little woman played a comedy, or rather a frightful tragedy. She risked all for everything. Was she sincere? Did she love Jean? How can one tell? Who can ever tell exactly how much ruse and how much sincerity there is in the actions of woman? They are always sincere in an eternal mobility of



impressions. They are hot-tempered, criminal, devoted, admirable, and base, in obedience to incomprehensible emotions. They lie continually, without wishing to, without knowing it, without understanding it, and, notwithstanding all that, they have an absolute frankness of sensations and of sentiments which they express by violent, unexpected, incomprehensible resolutions which set at naught our habits of thought and all our selfish combinations. The unexpectedness and rapidity of their decisions are the reason that they remain for us hopeless puzzles. We always ask ourselves: 'Are they sincere? Are they false?'



"But, my friend, they are simultaneously sincere and false, because it is in their nature to be both in extremes, and neither one or the other.

"Observe the methods which the best of them use in order to obtain something which they desire. They are complex and simple. So complicated that we can never guess them beforehand, so simple that after having been made victims, we cannot help being surprised and saying to ourselves: 'What! Was I as easy as all that?'

"And they always succeed, especially when marriage is the object.

"But here is a story of Jean Summer:

"The little woman is, naturally, a model. She used to pose for him. She was pretty, extremely elegant, and blessed, so they say, with a divine shape. He fell in love with her, as one falls in love with any seductive woman whom one sees very often. He imagined that he loved her with all his heart. That is a singular phenomenon. As soon as you desire a woman you sincerely believe that you could not go

through life without her. You know perfectly well that the same thing has happened to you before; that disgust has always followed possession; that in order to live out one's life beside another being, not a quickly extinguished, brutal, physical appetite is needed, but a harmony of temperament, of soul and of character. You must know how to distinguish in this seduction which one feels, whether it is caused by physical attraction, by a certain sensuous intoxication, or by a sweet charm of the mind.

"He thought that he loved her; he made her a lot of promises of faithfulness, and he lived entirely with her.

"She was really charming, gifted with the elegant simplicity which the Parisian woman so easily acquires. She chatted, she gossiped, she said a lot of foolish little things which seemed witty on account of her quaint little mannerisms. Her gestures were always graceful, well made and pleasing the eye of an artist. Whether she was lifting her arms or leaning over, whether she was getting into a carriage or holding out her hand to you, her movements were always timed exactly right.

"For three months Jean did not notice that she was just like all other models. They hired, for the summer, a little house at Andressy.

"I was there one evening when the first doubts dawned upon my friend.

"As the night was glorious we wished to take a walk along the river. The moon was casting a shimmering light across the water which was reflected back in silver beams by the eddies of the swirling current.

"We were walking along the banks, slightly intoxicated by this vague exaltation which is cast over us on these dream-evenings. We felt like accomplish-

ing superhuman things, like loving unknown, beautifully poetic beings. We felt within us strange raptures, desires and aspirations. We were silent, carried away by the freshness of the beautiful night, and by this mystic moonlight which seems to shine through the body, to penetrate it, to bathe and perfume our minds and to fill them with joy.



“ Suddenly Joséphine (her name is Joséphine) cried out:

“ ‘ Oh! did you see the big fish jump over there? ’

“ He answered without looking, without even knowing:

“ ‘ Yes, dearie.’

“ She grew angry.

“ ‘ No, you didn’t see it, your back was turned.’

“ He smiled:

“ ‘ I know it. It’s such a beautiful evening that I wasn’t thinking of anything.’

“ She was silent for a minute, and then asked:

“ ‘ Are you going to Paris to-morrow? ’

“ He answered:

“ ‘ I don’t know.’

“ And once more she grew angry:

“ ‘ If you think it’s fun to walk around without saying anything, you’re mistaken. Anybody but a fool would say something! ’

“ He did not answer. Then, with her perverse woman’s instinct, realizing that she would exasperate him, she began to hum a tune which she knew he detested.

“ He murmured:

“ ‘ Please stop! ’

“ Furious, she cried:

“ ‘ Why do you wish me to stop? ’

“ He answered:

“ ‘ You are spoiling the scenery! ’

“ Then came the odious, foolish scene, with its unexpected reproaches, its tempestuous recriminations, and then tears. She went through the whole program. They went home. He had let her run on without answering, deadened by this divine evening and thunderstruck by this storm of abuse.

“ Three months later they were hopelessly struggling with these invincible and invisible bonds with which custom surrounds our life. She held him, oppressed and tortured him. They quarreled from morning till night, insulting and beating each other.

“ Finally he decided to break off at any price. He sold all of his canvases, borrowed money from his friends, scraped together twenty thousand francs (he was not yet famous) and one morning he left them on the mantel-piece with a farewell letter.

“ He sought shelter with me.

“ At about three o'clock in the afternoon the door bell rang. I opened the door. A woman jumped at me, pushed me aside and rushed into my *atelier*: it was she.

“ He rose on seeing her enter.

“ She threw the envelope containing the money at his feet with a gesture that was really noble and said dryly:

“ ‘ Here is your money! I don't want it. ’

“ She was very pale, trembling, and undoubtedly prepared to do anything. As for him, I saw him also grow pale, pale from anger and exasperation, and ready perhaps to commit any act of violence.



“ He asked:

“ ‘ What do you wish? ’

" She answered:

" ' I do not wish to be treated like any common woman. You sought me out; you took me. I asked nothing of you. Keep me! '

" He stamped his foot:

" ' No, this is too much! If you think that you. . . . '

" I had taken him by the arm.

" ' Quiet, Jean. Let me handle this. '

" I went to her, and quietly, little by little, I talked reason to her, I emptied the bag of arguments which are commonly employed on these occasions. She listened to me, motionless, obstinate and dumb.

" At last, no longer knowing what to do, and seeing that the affair might end badly, I resorted to a last stratagem. I said:

" ' He still loves you, little one, but his family wish him to marry, and you understand! . . . '

" She jumped up:

" ' Ah! . . . Ah! . . . I understand. . . . '

" Turning towards him:

" ' You . . . you . . . are going to get married? '

" He answered firmly:

" ' Yes. '

" She stepped forward:

" ' If you marry, I will kill myself . . . do you understand! '

" Shrugging his shoulders he answered:

" ' Well . . . go ahead . . . kill yourself! '

" She gasped two or three times, her throat contracted by terrible agony:

" ' What? . . . What? . . . What? . . . say that again! '

" He repeated:

" ' Well, go ahead and kill yourself if it will give you any pleasure! '

“ She continued, still terribly pale :

“ ‘ You had better not dare me. I will throw myself out of the window.’

“ He began to laugh, went to the window, opened it, and bowing, like a person who does not wish to pass first, he said :

“ ‘ Here is the way. After you ! ’

“ She looked at him for a minute with a terrible, wild look ; then, gathering speed as though to jump a fence in the field, she rushed past me, past him, over the railing and out of sight. . . .

“ I will never forget the effect which this open window produced on me, after seeing it traversed by the body which was falling ; for a second it seemed to me to be as large as the sky and as empty as space. Instinctively I fell back, not daring to look, as though I were going to fall myself.

“ Jean, dazed, stood motionless.

“ The poor girl was brought back with both legs broken. She will never walk again.

“ Her lover, crazed by remorse, and perhaps also moved by gratitude, took her back and married her.

“ There is the story.”

Night was approaching. The young woman, feeling cool, wished to leave ; and the servant began to roll the cripple’s chair toward the village. The artist walked along side of his wife. Neither of them had spoken a word for an hour.





## THE WILL



**KNEW** that tall young fellow, René de Bourneval. He was an agreeable man, though rather melancholy and seemed prejudiced against everything; he was very skeptical, and he could with a word tear down social hypocrisy. He would often say:

“ There are no honorable men, or, at least, they are only relatively so when compared with those lower than themselves.”

He had two brothers, whom he never saw, the Messieurs de Courcils. I always supposed they were by another father, on account of the difference in the name. I had frequently heard that the family had a strange history, but did not know the details.

As I took a great liking to René we soon became intimate friends, and one evening, when I had been dining with him alone, I asked him by chance: “ Are you a son of the first or second marriage? ” He grew rather pale, and then flushed, and did not speak for a few moments; he was visibly embarrassed. Then he smiled in the melancholy, gentle manner, which was peculiar to him, and said:

“ My dear friend, if it will not weary you, I can

give you some very strange particulars about my life. I know that you are a sensible man, so I do not fear that our friendship will suffer by my revelations; and should it suffer, I should not care about having you for my friend any longer.

“ My mother, Madame de Courcils, was a poor little, timid woman, whom her husband had married for the sake of her fortune, and her whole life was one of martyrdom. Of a loving, timid, sensitive disposition, she was constantly being ill-treated by the man who ought to have been my father, one of those boors called country gentlemen. A month after their marriage he was living with a servant, and besides that the wives and daughters of his tenants were his mistresses, which did not prevent him from having three children by his wife, that is, if you count me in. My mother said nothing, and lived in that noisy house like a little mouse. Set aside, unnoticed, nervous, she looked at people with her bright, uneasy, restless eyes, the eyes of some terrified creature which can never shake off its fear. And yet she was pretty, very pretty and fair, a pale blonde, as if her hair had lost its color through her constant fears.

“ Amongst the friends of Monsieur de Courcils who constantly came to the *château*, there was an ex-cavalry officer, a widower, a man who was feared, who was at the same time tender and violent, capable of the most determined resolves, Monsieur de Bourneval, whose name I bear. He was a tall, thin man, with a heavy black mustache. I am very like him. He was a man who had read a great deal, and his ideas were not like those of most of his class. His great-grandmother had been a friend of J. J. Rousseau's, and one might have said that he had inherited something of this ancestral connection. He knew the *Contrat Social*, and the *Nouvelle Héloïse* by heart,



and all those philosophical books which prepared in advance the overthrow of our old usages, prejudices, superannuated laws, and imbecile morality.

"It seems that he loved my mother, and she loved him, but their intrigue was carried on so secretly that no one guessed it. The poor, neglected, unhappy woman must have clung to him in despair, and in her intimacy with him must have imbibed all his ways of thinking, theories of free thought, audacious ideas of independent love; but being so timid she never ventured to speak out, and it was all driven back, condensed, shut up in her heart.

"My two brothers were very hard toward her, like their father, and never gave her a caress; and, accustomed to seeing her count for nothing in the house, they treated her rather like a servant. I was the only one of her sons who really loved her, and whom she loved.

"When she died I was seventeen, and I must add, in order that you may understand what follows, that a lawsuit between my father and mother had been decided in my mother's favor, giving her the bulk of the property, and, thanks to the tricks of the law, and the intelligent devotion of a lawyer to her interests, the right to make her will in favor of whom she pleased.

"We were told that there was a will at the lawyer's office, and were invited to be present at the reading of it. I can remember it, as if it were yesterday. It was a grand scene, dramatic, burlesque, and surprising, occasioned by the posthumous revolt of that dead woman, by the cry for liberty, by the demands of that martyred woman who had been crushed by our oppression during her lifetime, and who, from her closed tomb, uttered a despairing appeal for independence.

“The man who believed he was my father, a stout, ruddy-faced man, who looked like a butcher, and my brothers, two great fellows of twenty and twenty-two, were waiting quietly in their chairs. Monsieur de Bourneval, who had been invited to be present, came in and stood behind me. He was very pale, and bit his mustache, which was turning gray. No doubt he was prepared for what was about to happen. The lawyer double-locked the door and began to read the will, after having opened, in our presence, the envelope, sealed with red wax, of the contents of which he was ignorant.”

My friend stopped talking, abruptly, and rising, took from his writing-table an old paper, unfolded it, kissed it, and then continued: “This is the will of my beloved mother:

“‘I, the undersigned, Anne Catherine-Geneviève-Mathilde de Croixluce, the legitimate wife of Leopold-Joseph Goutran de Courcils, sound in body and mind, here express my last wishes.

“‘I first of all ask God, and then my dear son René, to pardon me for the act I am about to commit. I believe that my child’s heart is great enough to understand me, and to forgive me. I have suffered my whole life long. I was married out of calculation, then despised, misunderstood, oppressed, and constantly deceived by my husband.

“‘I forgive him, but I owe him nothing.

“‘My elder sons never loved me, never petted me, scarcely treated me as a mother, but during my whole life I did my duty toward them, and I owe them nothing more after my death. The ties of blood cannot exist without daily and constant affection. An ungrateful son is less than a stranger; he is a culprit, for he has no right to be indifferent toward his mother.

“‘I have always trembled before men, before their unjust laws, their inhuman customs, their shameful prejudices. Before God, I have no longer any fear. Dead, I fling aside disgraceful hypocrisy: I dare to speak my thoughts, and to avow and to sign the secret of my heart.

“‘I therefore leave that part of my fortune of which the law allows me to dispose, as a deposit with my dear lover Pierre-Germer-Simon de Bourneval, to revert afterward to our dear son René.

“‘(This bequest is specified more precisely in a deed drawn up by a notary.)

“‘And I declare before the Supreme Judge who hears me, that I should have cursed heaven and my own existence if I had not found the deep, devoted, tender, unshaken affection of my lover; if I had not felt in his arms that the Creator made His creatures to love, sus-

tain and console each other, and to weep together in the hours of sadness.

“ ‘ Monsieur de Courcils is the father of my two eldest sons; René alone owes his life to Monsieur de Bourneval. I pray the Master of men and of their destinies, to place father and son above social prejudices, to make them love each other until they die, and to love me also in my coffin.

“ ‘ These are my last thoughts, and my last wish.

“ ‘ ‘ MATHILDE DE CROIXLUCE.’ ”

“ ‘ Monsieur de Courcils had risen, and he cried:

“ ‘ It is the will of a madwoman.’

“ ‘ Then Monsieur de Bourneval stepped forward and said in a loud and penetrating voice: ‘ I, Simon de Bourneval, solemnly declare that this writing contains nothing but the strict truth, and I am ready to prove it by letters which I possess.’

“ ‘ On hearing that, Monsieur de Courcils went up to him, and I thought that they were about to attack each other. There they stood, both of them tall, one stout and the other thin, both trembling. My mother’s husband stammered out: ‘ You are a worthless wretch! ’ And the other replied in a loud, dry voice: ‘ We will meet elsewhere, Monsieur. I should have already slapped your ugly face, and challenged you long since, if I had not, before everything else, thought of the peace of mind during her lifetime of that poor woman whom you caused to suffer so greatly.’

“ ‘ Then, turning to me, he said: ‘ You are my son; will you come with me? I have no right to take you away, but I shall assume it, if you are willing to come with me.’ I shook his hand without replying, and we went out together; I was certainly three parts mad.

“ ‘ Two days later Monsieur de Bourneval killed Monsieur de Courcils in a duel. My brothers, to avoid a terrible scandal, held their tongues. I offered them, and they accepted, half the fortune which my

mother had left me. I took my real father's name, renouncing that which the law gave me, but which was not really mine. Monsieur de Bourneval died three years later, and I am still inconsolable."

He rose from his chair, walked up and down the room, and, standing in front of me, said:

" Well, I say that my mother's will was one of the most beautiful, the most loyal, as well as one of the grandest acts that a woman could perform. Do you not think so? "

I held out both hands to him, saying:

" I most certainly do, my friend."





## THE SHEPHERD'S LEAP



HIGH cliffs, perpendicular as a wall, skirt the sea-front between Dieppe and Havre. In a depression in the cliffs, here and there, one sees a little narrow gulch with steep sides covered with short grass and gorse, which descends from the cultivated table-land toward a shingly beach, where it ends in a depression like the bed of a torrent. Nature made those valleys; the rainstorms created those depressions in which they terminate, wearing away what remained of the cliff, and channeling as far as the sea the bed of the stream.

Sometimes a village lies concealed in these gulches, into which the wind rushes straight from the open sea.

I spent a summer in one of these coast valleys with a peasant, whose house, facing the waves, enabled me to see from my window a huge triangular sweep of blue water framed by the green slopes of the valley, and lighted up in places by white sails passing in the distance in the sunlight.

The road leading towards the sea ran through the further end of the defile, abruptly passed between two chalk cliffs, became a sort of deep gulley before opening on a beautiful carpet of smooth pebbles, rounded and polished by the immemorial caress of the waves.

This steep gorge was called the "Shepherd's Leap."

Here is the drama which originated this name.

\* \* \* \* \*

The story goes that this village was at one time ruled by an austere and violent young priest. He left the seminary filled with hatred toward those who lived according to natural laws, and did not follow the laws of his God. Inflexibly severe on himself, he displayed merciless intolerance toward others. One thing above all stirred him up with rage and disgust—love. If he had lived in cities in the midst of the civilized and the refined, who conceal the brutal dictates of nature behind delicate veils of sentiment and tenderness, if he had heard the confessions of perfumed sinners in some vast cathedral nave, in which their guilt was softened by the grace of their fall and the idealism surrounding material kisses, he would not perhaps have felt those fierce revolts, those inordinate outbursts of anger that took possession of him when he witnessed the vulgar misconduct of some rustic pair in a ditch or in a barn.

He likened them to brutes, these people who knew nothing of love and who simply paired like animals; and he hated them for the coarseness of their souls, for the foul way in which they appeased their instincts, for the repulsive merriment exhibited even by old men when they happened to talk about these unclean pleasures.

Perhaps, too, he was tortured, in spite of himself, by the pangs of appetites which he had refrained from satiating, and secretly troubled by the struggle of his body in its revolt against a spirit despotic and chaste. But everything that had reference to the flesh filled him with indignation, made him furious; and his violent sermons, full of threats and indignant allusions, caused the girls to titter and the young fellows to cast sly glances at them across the church; while the farmers in their blue blouses and their wives in their black mantles, said to each other on their way home from mass before entering their houses, from the chimney of each of which ascended a thin blue film of smoke:

“ He does not joke about the matter, Mo’sieu’ the Curé! ”

On one occasion, and for very slight cause, he flew into such a passion that he lost his reason. He went to see a sick woman. As soon as he reached the farm-yard, he saw a crowd of children, those of the house as well and some of their friends, gathered around a dog’s kennel. They were staring curiously at something, standing there motionless, with concentrated, silent attention. The priest walked towards them. It was a dog and her litter of puppies. In front of the kennel five little puppies were swarming around their mother, who was affectionately licking them, and at the moment when the *curé* stretched forward his head above the heads of the children, a sixth tiny pup was born. All the brats, seized with joy at the sight of it, began to bawl out, clapping their hands: “ Here’s another of them! Here’s another of them! ”

To them it was a pleasure, a natural pleasure, into which nothing impure entered; they gazed at the birth of the puppies just as they would have

looked at apples falling from trees. But the man with the black robe was quivering with indignation, and, losing his head, he lifted up his big blue umbrella and began to beat the youngsters. They retreated at full speed. Then, finding himself left alone with the animal, he proceeded to beat her also. As in her condition she was unable to run away she moaned while she struggled against his attack, and jumping on top of her, he crushed her under his feet, and with a few kicks with his heel finished her off. Then he left the body bleeding in the midst of the new-born animals, whining and helpless and instinctively making efforts to get at the mother's teats.

\* \* \* \* \*

He would take long walks, all alone, with a frown on his face. Now, one evening in May, as he was returning from a place some distance away, and going along by the cliff to get back to the village, a fierce shower of rain impeded his progress. He could see no house in sight, only the bare coast on every side riddled by the pelting downpour.

The rough sea dashed against him in masses of foam; and thick black clouds gathering at the horizon redoubled the rain. The wind whistled, blew great guns, battered down the growing crops, and the dripping Abbé; filling his ears with noises, and exciting his heart with its tumult.

He took off his hat, exposing his forehead to the storm, and by degrees approached the descent towards the lowland. But he had such a rattling in his throat that he could not advance farther, and, all of a sudden, he espied near a sheep pasture, a shepherd's hut, a kind of movable box on wheels that the shepherds can drag in summer from pasture to pasture.



Above a wooden stool, a low door was open, affording a view of the straw inside.

The priest was on the point of entering to take shelter when he saw a loving couple embracing each other in the shadow. Thereupon, he abruptly closed the door and fastened it; then, getting the shafts, he bent his lean back and dragged the hut after him, like a horse. And thus he ran along in his drenched cassock toward the steep incline, the fatal incline, with the young couple he had caught together, who were banging their fists against the door of the hut, believing probably that the whole thing was only the practical joke of a passer-by.

When he got to the top of the descent, he let go of the frail structure, which began to roll over the sloping side of the cliff. It then rolled down precipitately, carried along blindly, ever increasing in the speed of its course, leaping, stumbling like an animal, striking the ground with its shafts.

An old beggar, cuddled up in a gap near the cliff, saw it passing, with a rush above his head, and he heard dreadful cries coming from the interior of this wooden box.

Suddenly a wheel fell off from a collision with some stone; and then the hut, falling on one side, began to topple downward like a ball, like a house torn from its foundations, and tumbling down from the top of a mountain; and then, having reached the edge of the last depression it turned over, describing a curve in its fall, and was broken like an egg, at the bottom of the cliff.

The pair of lovers were picked up, bruised, battered, with all their limbs fractured, but still clasped in each other's arms, but now through terror.

The *curé* refused to admit their corpses into the church or to pronounce a benediction over their cof-

fin. And on the following Sunday in his sermon he spoke vehemently about the Seventh Commandment, threatening the lovers with an avenging and mysterious arm, and citing the terrible example of the two wretches killed in the midst of their sin.

As he was leaving the church, two gendarmes arrested him.

A coast-guard who was in a sentry-box had seen him.

The priest was sentenced to a term of penal servitude.

\* \* \* \* \*

And the peasant who told me the story added gravely:

"I knew him, Monsieur. He was a rough man, that's a fact, but he did not like fooling."





## FRIEND PATIENCE



HAT became of Leremy?"

"He is captain in the Sixth Dragoons."

"And Pinson?"

"He's a subprefect."

"And Racollet?"

"Dead."

We were searching for other names which would remind us of the youthful faces of our younger days. Once in a while we had met some of these old comrades, bearded, bald, married, fathers of several children, and the realization of these changes had given us uncomfortable thrills, showing us how short life is, how everything ends, how everything changes. My friend asked me:

"And Patience, fat Patience?"

I almost howled:

"Oh! as for him, just listen to this. Four or five years ago I was in Limoges, on a tour of inspection, and I was waiting for dinner time. I was seated before the big café in the Place du Théâtre, and having the duller time of my life. The trades-

people were coming by twos, threes or fours, to take their absinthe or vermouth, talking all the time of their or other people's business, laughing loudly, or lowering their voices in order to impart some important or delicate piece of news.

"I was saying to myself: 'What am I going to do after dinner?' And I thought of the long evening in this provincial town, of the slow, dreary walk through unknown streets, of the impression of deadly gloom which these provincial people produce on the lonely traveler and of the whole oppressive atmosphere which the place cast around me.

"I was thinking of all these things as I watched the little jets of gas flare up, feeling my loneliness increase with the falling shadows.

"A big, fat man sat down at the next table and called in a stentorian voice:

" 'Waiter, my bitters!'

"The '*my*' came out like the report of a cannon. I immediately understood that everything was his in life and not another's; that he had his nature, by Jove, his appetite, his trousers, *his* everything, his absolutely and more completely than anyone else's. Then he looked around him with a satisfied air. His bitters were brought, and he ordered:

" 'My newspaper!'

"I wondered: 'Which newspaper can be his?' The title would certainly reveal to me his opinions, his theories, his principles, his hobbies, his weaknesses.

"The waiter brought the *Temps*. I was surprised. Why the *Temps*, a serious, *doctrinaire*, weighty sheet? I thought:

" 'He must be a serious man with settled and regular habits; in short, a good *bourgeois*.'

"He put on his gold-rimmed spectacles, leaned

back before beginning to read, and once more glanced about him. He noticed me, and immediately began to stare at me in an annoying manner. I was even going to ask the reason for this attention, when he cried from his seat:

“ ‘ Well, by all that’s holy, if this isn’t Gontran Lardois.’ ”

“ I answered:

“ ‘ Yes, Monsieur, you are not mistaken.’ ”

“ ‘ Then he quickly arose and came toward me with hands outstretched:

“ ‘ Well, old man, how are you? ’ ”

“ ‘ As I did not recognize him at all, I was greatly embarrassed. I stammered:

“ ‘ Why—very well—and—you? ’ ”

“ ‘ He began to laugh:

“ ‘ I bet you don’t recognize me.’ ”

“ ‘ No, not exactly. It seems—however——’ ”

“ ‘ He slapped me on the back:

“ ‘ Come on, no joking! I am Patience, Robert Patience, your friend, your chum.’ ”

“ ‘ I recognized him. Yes, Robert Patience, my old college chum. It was he. I took his outstretched hand:

“ ‘ And how are you? ’ ”

“ ‘ Fine! ’ ”

“ ‘ His smile was like a pæan of victory.

“ ‘ He asked:

“ ‘ What are you doing here? ’ ”

“ ‘ I explained that I was government inspector of finances.

“ ‘ He continued, pointing to my red ribbon:

“ ‘ Then you have succeeded? ’ ”

“ ‘ I answered:

“ ‘ Pretty well. And you? ’ ”

“ ‘ Me? Fine! ’ ”

“ ‘What are you doing?’

“ ‘I’m in business.’

“ ‘Making money?’

“ ‘Lots; I’m very rich. But come around to lunch, to-morrow noon, 17 Rue du Coq-qui-Chante; you will see my place.’

“ He seemed to hesitate a second, then continued:

“ ‘Are you still the good sport that you used to be?’

“ ‘I—I hope so.’

“ ‘Not married?’

“ ‘No.’

“ ‘Good. And do you still love a good time and potatoes?’

“ I was beginning to find him hopelessly vulgar. Nevertheless, I answered:

“ ‘Yes.’

“ ‘And pretty girls?’

“ ‘Most assuredly.’

“ He began to laugh in a satisfied manner:

“ ‘Good, good! Do you remember our first escapade, in Bordeaux, after we had had that dinner at Routie’s? What a time!’

“ I did, indeed, remember this time; and the memory of it cheered me up. This called to mind other pranks. He would say:

“ ‘Say, do you remember the time when we locked the proctor up in old man Latoque’s cellar?’

“ And he laughed and banged the table with his fist, and then he continued:

“ ‘Yes—yes—yes—and do you remember the face of the geography teacher, old Marin, the day we set off a firecracker in the globe, just as he was haranguing about the principal volcanoes of the earth?’

“ Then suddenly I asked him:

“ ‘ And you, are you married? ’

“ He exclaimed:

“ ‘ Ten years, my boy, and I have four children, great little beggars; but you’ll see them with their mother.’

“ We were talking loud; the people around us were looking at us in surprise.

“ Suddenly my friend looked at his watch, a chronometer the size of a pumpkin, and he cried:

“ ‘ Thunder! I’m sorry, but I’ll have to leave you; I am never free at night.’

“ He rose, took both my hands, shook them as though he wished to wrench my arms out of their sockets, and exclaimed:

“ ‘ So long, then, till to-morrow noon! ’

“ ‘ So long! ’



“ I spent the morning working in the Treasury. The Treasurer wished to keep me for lunch, but I told him that I had an engagement with a friend. As he had to go out, he accompanied me.

“ I asked him:

“ ‘ Can you tell me how I can find the Rue du Coq-qui-Chante? ’

“ He answered:

“ ‘ Yes, it’s only five minutes’ walk from here. As I have nothing special to do, I will take you around.’

“ We started out.

“ We soon found ourselves there. It was a wide, fine-looking street, on the outskirts of the town and of the fields. I looked at the houses and I noticed No. 17. It was a large house with a garden behind it. The façade, decorated with frescoes, in the Italian style, appeared to me as being in bad taste. There

were goddesses holding vases, others wrapped up in clouds. Two stone cupids supported the number.

"I said to the Treasurer:

" 'Here is where I am going.'

"I held my hand out to him. He made a quick, strange motion, said nothing and shook my hand.

"I rang. A maid appeared. I asked:

" 'Monsieur Patience, if you please?'

"She answered:

" 'Right here, sir. Is it to Monsieur that you wish to speak?'

" 'Yes.'

"The hall was decorated with paintings from the brush of some local artist. Pauls and Virginias were kissing each other under palm trees bathed in a pink light. A hideous Oriental lantern was hanging from the ceiling. Several doors were concealed by bright hangings.

"But what struck me especially was the smell. It was a sickening and perfumed smell, reminding one of rice powder and mold, the heavy atmosphere and indefinable odor which exist in places where dead bodies are kept. I followed the maid up a marble stairway, covered with a green Oriental carpet, and I was ushered into a sumptuous parlor.

"Left alone, I looked around.

"The room was richly furnished, but in the pretentious taste of a *parvenu*. Engravings of the last century, rather well done, represented women with high head-dressing surprised by gentlemen in interesting positions. Another lady, lying in a large bed, was teasing with her foot a little dog, lost in the sheets. One drawing showed four feet, whose bodies could be guessed, hidden behind a curtain. The vast room, surrounded by soft couches, was entirely impregnated with that enervating and insipid



odor which I had already noticed. There seemed to be something suspicious about the walls, the hangings, the exaggerated luxury, everything.

"I approached the window in order to observe the garden, whose trees I could already see. It was very big, shady, beautiful. A wide path wound around a grass plot, where a fountain played, entered a thicket and came out farther away. And suddenly, beyond in the distance, between two clumps of bushes, three women appeared. They were walking slowly, arm in arm, clad in long white tea-gowns covered with lace. Two were blondes and the other was dark-haired. Almost immediately they disappeared again behind the trees. I stood there entranced, delighted, with this short and charming apparition, which brought to my mind a whole world of poetry. They had scarcely allowed themselves to be seen, in just the proper light, in that frame of foliage, in the back of that mystic-looking, delightful park. For a second it seemed to me that I had seen before me the great ladies of the last century, who were depicted in the engravings on the wall. And I was thinking of the happy, joyous, witty and amorous times where the customs were so sweet and the lips were so easy.

"A deep voice made me jump. Patience had come in, and, delighted, was holding out his hands to me.

"He looked into my eyes with the sly look which one takes when divulging secrets of love, and, with a Napoleonic gesture, he showed me his sumptuous parlor, his park, the three women, who had reappeared in the back of it, then, in a triumphant voice, where the note of pride was prominent, he said:

" ' And to think that I began with nothing—my wife and my sister-in-law! ' "



## MAGNETISM



It was a men's dinner party, and they were sitting over their cigars and brandy and discussing magnetism, Donato's tricks and Charcot's experiments. Presently the skeptical, easy-going men, who cared nothing for religion of any sort, began telling stories of strange occurrences, incredible things which, nevertheless, had really occurred, so they said, falling back into superstitious beliefs, clinging to these last remnants of the marvelous, becoming devotees of this mystery of magnetism, defending it in the name of science. There was only one person who smiled, a vigorous young fellow, a great ladies' man, who was so incredulous that he would not even enter upon a discussion of such matters.

He repeated with a sneer:

"Humbug! humbug! humbug! We need not discuss Donato, who is merely a very smart juggler. As for Monsieur Charcot, who is said to be a great man of science, he produces on me the effect of those story-tellers of the school of Edgar Poe, who end by going mad through constantly reflecting on queer cases of insanity. He has authenticated some cases of unexplained and inexplicable nervous phenomena;

he makes his way into that unknown region which men are exploring every day, and unable always to understand what he sees, he recalls, perhaps, the ecclesiastical interpretation of these mysteries. I should like to hear what he says himself."

The words of the unbeliever were listened to with a kind of pity, as if he had blasphemed in an assembly of monks.

One of these gentlemen exclaimed:

"And yet miracles were performed in olden times."

"I deny it," replied the other. "Why cannot they be performed now?"

Then each mentioned some fact, some fantastic presentiment, some instance of souls communicating with each other across space, or some case of the secret influence of one being over another. They asserted and maintained that these things had actually occurred, while the skeptic angrily repeated:

"Humbug! humbug! humbug!"

At last he rose, threw away his cigar, and with his hands in his pockets, said: "Well, I also have two stories to tell you, which I will afterward explain. Here they are:

"In the little village of Étretat, the men, who are all seafaring folk, go every year to Newfoundland to fish for cod. One night the little son of one of these fishermen woke up with a start, crying out that his father was dead. The child was quieted, and again he woke up exclaiming that his father was drowned. A month later the news came that his father had, in fact, been swept off the deck of his smack by a billow. The widow then remembered how her son had waked up and spoken of his father's death. Everyone said it was a miracle, and the affair caused a great sensation. The dates were com-

pared, and it was found that the accident and the dream were almost coincident, whence they concluded that they had happened on the same night and at the same hour. And there is a mystery of magnetism."

The story-teller stopped suddenly.

Thereupon, one of those who had heard him, much affected by the narrative, asked:

"And can you explain this?"

"Perfectly, Monsieur. I have discovered the secret. The circumstance surprised me and even perplexed me very much; but, you see, I do not believe, on principle. Just as others begin by believing, I begin by doubting; and when I cannot understand, I continue to deny that there can be any telepathic communication between souls, certain that my own intelligence will be able to explain it. Well, I kept on inquiring into the matter, and by dint of questioning all the wives of the absent seamen, I was convinced that not a week passed without one of them, or one of their children dreaming and declaring when they woke up that the father was drowned. The horrible and continual fear of this accident makes them always talk about it. Now, if one of these frequent predictions coincides, by a very simple chance, with the death of the person referred to, people at once declare it to be a miracle; for they suddenly lose sight of all the other predictions of misfortune that have remained unfulfilled. I have myself known fifty cases where the persons who made the prediction forgot all about it a week afterwards. But, if the man happened to die, then the recollection of the thing is immediately revived, and people are ready to believe in the intervention of God, according to some, and magnetism, according to others."

One of the smokers remarked:

“What you say is right enough; but what about your second story?”

“Oh! my second story is a very delicate matter to relate. It happened to myself, and so I don’t place any great value on my own view of the matter. An interested party can never give an impartial opinion. However, here it is:

“Among my acquaintances was a young woman on whom I had never bestowed a thought, whom I had never even looked at attentively, never taken any notice of.

“I classed her among the women of no importance, though she was not bad-looking; she appeared, in fact, to possess eyes, a nose, a mouth, some sort of hair—just a colorless type of countenance. She was one of those beings who awaken only a chance, passing thought, but no special interest, no desire.

“Well, one night, as I was writing some letters by my fireside before going to bed, I was conscious, in the midst of that train of sensuous visions that sometimes pass through one’s brain in moments of idle reverie, of a kind of a light breath passing through me, a little flutter of the heart, and immediately, without any cause, without any logical connection of thought, I saw distinctly, as if I were touching her, saw from head to foot, and disrobed, this young woman to whom I had never given more than three seconds’ thought at a time. I suddenly discovered in her a number of qualities which I had never before observed, a sweet charm, a languorous fascination; she awakened in me that sort of restless emotion that causes one to pursue a woman. But I did not think of her long. I went to bed and was soon asleep. And I dreamed.

“You have all had these strange dreams which

make you overcome the impossible, which open to you double-locked doors, unexpected joys, tightly folded arms?

“ Which of us in these troubled, exciting, breathless slumbers, has not held, clasped, embraced with rapture, the woman who occupied his thoughts? And have you ever noticed what superhuman delight these happy dreams give us? Into what mad intoxication they cast you! with what passionate spasms they shake you! and with what infinite, caressing, penetrating tenderness they fill your heart for her whom you hold clasped in your arms in that adorable illusion that is so like reality!

“ All this I felt with unforgettable violence. This woman was mine, so much mine that the pleasant warmth of her skin remained in my fingers, the odor of her skin in my brain, the taste of her kisses on my lips, the sound of her voice lingered in my ears, the touch of her clasp still clung to me, and the burning charm of her tenderness still gratified my senses long after the delight but disillusion of my awakening.

“ And three times that night I had the same dream.

“ When day dawned she haunted me, possessed me, filled my senses to such an extent that I was not one second without thinking of her.

“ At last, not knowing what to do, I dressed myself and went to call on her. As I went up-stairs to her apartment, I was so overcome by emotion that I trembled, and my heart beat rapidly.

“ I entered the apartment. She rose the moment she heard my name pronounced, and suddenly our eyes met in a peculiar fixed gaze.

“ I sat down. I stammered out some common-places which she seemed not to hear. I did not

know what to say or do. Then, abruptly, clasping my arms round her, my dream was realized so suddenly that I began to doubt whether I was really awake. We were friends after this for two years."

"What conclusion do you draw from it?" said a voice.

The story-teller seemed to hesitate.

"The conclusion I draw from it—well, by Jove, the conclusion is that it was just a coincidence! And then—who can tell? Perhaps it was some glance of hers which I had not noticed and which came back that night to me through one of those mysterious and unconscious recollections that often bring before us things ignored by our own consciousness, unperceived by our minds!"

"Whatever you like to call it," said one of his table companions, when the story was finished, "but if you don't believe in magnetism after that, my dear boy, you are an ungrateful fellow!"



## FAREWELL!



THE two friends were getting near the end of their dinner. Through the café windows they could see the Boulevard, crowded with people. They could feel the gentle breezes which are wafted over Paris on warm summer evenings, which make you feel like going out somewhere, you care not where, under the trees, and make you dream of moonlit rivers, of fireflies and of larks.

One of the two, Henri Simon, heaved a deep sigh and said:

“ Ah! I am growing old. It’s sad. Formerly, on the evenings like these, I felt full of life. Now, I only feel regrets. Life is short! ”

He was perhaps forty-five years old, very bald and already growing stout.

The other, Pierre Carnier, a trifle older, but thin and lively, answered:

“ Well, my boy, I have grown old without noticing it in the least. I have always been merry, healthy, vigorous and all the rest. As one sees oneself in the mirror every day, one does not realize



the work of age, for it is slow, regular, and it modifies the countenance so gently that the changes are unnoticeable. It is for this reason alone that we do not die of sorrow after two or three years of excitement. For we cannot understand the alterations which time produces. In order to appreciate them one would have to remain six months without seeing one's own face—then, oh, what a shock!

“And the women, my friend, how I pity the poor beings! All their joy, all their power, all their life, lies in their beauty, which lasts ten years.

“As I said, I aged without noticing it; I thought myself practically a youth, when I was almost fifty years old. Not feeling the slightest infirmity, I went about, happy and peaceful.

“The revelation of my decline came to me in a simple and terrible manner, which overwhelmed me for almost six months—then I became resigned.

“Like all men, I have often been in love, but most especially once.

“I met her at the seashore, at Étretat, about twelve years ago, shortly after the war. There is nothing prettier than this beach during the morning bathing-hour. It is small, shaped like a horseshoe, framed by high, white cliffs, which are pierced by strange holes called the ‘Portes,’ one stretching out into the ocean like the leg of a giant, the other short and dumpy. The women gather on the narrow strip of sand in this frame of high rocks, which they make into a gorgeous garden of beautiful gowns. The sun beats down on the shores, on the multicolored parasols, on the blue-green sea; and all is gay, delightful, smiling. You sit down at the edge of the water and you watch the bathers. The women come down, wrapped in long bathing-gowns, which they throw off daintily when they reach the foamy edge of the

choppy waves; and they run into the water with a rapid little step, stopping from time to time for a delightful little thrill from the cold water, a short suffocation.

“ Very few stand the test of the bath. It is there that they can be judged, from the ankle to the throat. Especially on leaving the water are the defects revealed, although water is a powerful aid to flabby skin.

“ The first time that I saw this young woman in the water, I was delighted, entranced. She stood the test well. There are faces whose charms appeal to you at first glance and delight you instantly. You seem to have found the woman whom you were born to love. I had that feeling and that shock.

“ I was introduced, and was soon smitten worse than I had ever been before. My heart longed for her. It is a terrible yet delightful thing thus to be dominated by a young woman. It is almost torture, and yet infinite delight. Her look, her smile, her hair fluttering in the wind, the little lines of her face, the slightest movement of her features, delighted me, upset me, entranced me. She had captured me body and soul, by her gestures, her manners, even by her clothes, which seemed to take on a peculiar charm as soon as she wore them. I grew tender at the sight of her veil on some piece of furniture, her gloves thrown on a chair. Her gowns seemed to me inimitable. Nobody had hats like hers.

“ She was married, but her husband only came every Saturday and left on Monday. I didn't concern myself about him, anyhow. I wasn't jealous of him, I don't know why; never did a creature seem to me to be of less importance in life, attract my attention less than this man.

“ But she! how I loved her! How beautiful,

graceful and young she was! She was youth, elegance, freshness itself! Never before had I felt so strongly what a pretty, neat, distinguished, delicate, charming, graceful being woman is. Never before had I appreciated the seductive beauty to be found in the curve of a cheek, the movement of a lip, the pinkness of an ear, the shape of that foolish organ called the nose.

"This lasted three months; then I left for America, overwhelmed with sadness. But her memory remained in me, persistent, triumphant. From far away I was as much hers as I had been when she was near me. Years passed by, and I did not forget her. The charming image of her person was ever before my eyes and in my heart. And my love remained true to her, a quiet tenderness still, something like the beloved memory of the most beautiful and the most enchanting thing I had met in my life.



"Twelve years are not much in a life-time! One does not feel them slip by. The years follow each other gently and quickly, slowly yet rapidly, each one is long and yet so soon over! They add up so rapidly, they leave so few traces behind them, they disappear so completely, that, when one turns around to look back over bygone years, one sees nothing and yet one does not understand how one happens to be so old. It seemed to me really that hardly a few months separated me from that charming season on the sands of Étretat.

"Last spring, I was going to Maisons-Laffitte for dinner with some friends.

"Just as the train was leaving, a big, fat lady, escorted by four little girls, got into my car. I hardly looked at this mother hen, very big, very

round, with a face as full as the moon and framed in an enormous, beribboned hat.

"She was panting, out of breath from having been forced to walk quickly. The children began to chatter. I unfolded my paper and began to read.

"We had just passed Asnières, when my neighbor suddenly turned to me and said:

"'Excuse me, sir, but are you not Monsieur Garnier?'

"'Yes, Madame.'

"Then she began to laugh, the pleased laugh of a good woman, and yet it was sad.

"'You do not seem to recognize me.'

"I hesitated. It seemed to me that I had seen that face somewhere; but where? when? I answered:

"'Yes—and no. I certainly know you, and yet I cannot recall your name.'

"She blushed a little:

"'Madame Julie Lefèvre.'

"Never had I received such a shock. In a second it seemed to me as though all were over with me! I felt that a veil had been torn from my eyes and that I was going to make a horrible and heartrending discovery.

"So that was she! That big, fat, common woman, she! She had hatched these four girls since I had last seen her. And these little beings surprised me as much as their mother. They came from her; they were big, and already had a place in life. Whereas she no longer counted, she, that marvel of dainty and charming gracefulness. It seemed to me that I had seen her but yesterday, and this is how I found her again! Was it possible? A poignant grief seized my heart, and also a revolt against nature herself, an unreasoning indignation against this brutal, infamous act of destruction.

" I looked at her, bewildered. Then I took her hand in mine, and tears came to my eyes. I wept for her lost youth. For I did not know this fat lady.

" She was also excited, and stammered:

" " I am greatly changed, am I not? What can you expect—everything has its time! You see, I have become a mother, nothing but a good mother. Farewell to the rest, that is over. Oh! I never expected you to recognize me if we were to meet. You too have changed. It took me quite a while to be sure that I was not mistaken. Your hair is all white. Just think! Twelve years ago! Twelve years! My oldest girl is already ten."

" I looked at the child. And I recognized in her something of her mother's old charm, but something as yet unformed, something which promised for the future. And life seemed to me as swift as a passing train.

" We had reached Maisons-Laffitte. I kissed my old friend's hand. I had found nothing but the most commonplace remarks to say to her. I was too much upset to talk.

" At night, alone, at home, I stood in front of the mirror for a long time, a very long time. And I finally remembered what I had been by seeing in my mind's eye my brown mustache, my black hair and the youthful expression of my face. Now I was old. Farewell! "





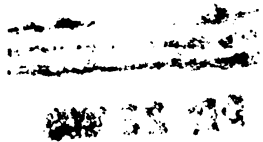












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